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The Formation of Ottoman Sufism and Eşrefoğlu Rumi:  
A 15<sup>th</sup> Century Shaykh Between Popular Religion and Sufi Ideals

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

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July 2020  
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## **Abstract**

This dissertation evaluates a transformative period in the history of the Ottoman State in which the processes of Islamization and Turkification coincided with the expansion and imperialization of the Ottoman polity. This study focuses on an Ottoman Sufi figure, Eşrefoğlu Rumi (?-1469), who benefited from this context, embarked upon a mystical path, and authored seminal works that shaped Ottoman Sufism for generations. This dissertation discusses Eşrefoğlu Rumi's role in the construction of Islamic orthodoxy based in his Sufi ideals which he disseminated to an Anatolian and Balkan Turkish-speaking Ottoman audience. The significance of this dissertation is that it emphasizes the agency of individual scholars and saints in the making of Ottoman Islam while challenging the dichotomous categorizations such as "orthodoxy" vs. "heterodoxy" and "popular" and "high Islam."

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**Abbreviations**

EI2: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition

TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi

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## Introduction

The image of the Ottoman state has been one that is largely built on the reigns of famous sultans such as Mehmed II and Süleyman I. The period prior to the imperial transformation of the Ottoman Empire has been the least studied and understood period of Ottoman history. In addition, the dynamics in which this imperial transformation occurred are also not well understood. My interest in the period of the 15<sup>th</sup> century originates from this lack of understanding regarding this crucial period.

Similarly, the understanding of Ottoman Islam has been mostly shaped by the legacy of the Ottoman state. In other words, it is mostly the chief muftis (*şeyhülislams*) who were directly appointed by the sultans as well as some other leading members of the Ottoman *ulema* that have usually been seen as the “makers” of Ottoman Islam. The famous mosque complexes that were commissioned by Ottoman sultans have similarly been seen as the main symbols of Ottoman Islam. The abundance of documents produced by the Ottoman state has been a blessing for Ottoman historians. As a result of this abundance, the understanding of Ottoman Islam, just like the understanding of Ottoman history in general, has been mostly analyzed from the perspective of Ottoman state.

Meanwhile, people that were outside of the realm of the state have usually been seen as minor players or having played only an indirect role in the making of Ottoman Islam. However, people like independent scholars and saints played a significant role in the making of Ottoman

Islam as well. In addition, the literature on Ottoman Islam has utilized binary categorizations such as “heterodoxy” vs. “orthodoxy” and “popular Islam” vs. “high Islam” which often appear not entirely satisfactory when used to explain major aspects of the history and nature of Islam in the Ottoman society.

My research interest in Eşrefoğlu Rumi (?-1469) originates from the need to better understand the context I have referred to above. Before I undertook the research into Eşrefoğlu Rumi, I realized that analyzing independent scholars and/or Sufis’ roles in the making of Ottoman Islam would contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of this less studied period. The more I studied Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s ideas and his understanding of Sufi Islam, the more I became persuaded that studying people like him will help move the understanding of Ottoman Islam away from rigid binary categorizations and offer fresh and more sophisticated perspectives on Islam (and religion in general) in the early modern Ottoman Empire.

The dissertation consists of four main chapters. Chapter One provides a brief outline of early Ottoman history, discusses the history of Ottoman Islam and introduces Eşrefoğlu Rumi by addressing his life and works. Chapter Two focuses on the analysis of Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s *Book of the Sufi Path (Tarikatname)*. This analysis aims to demonstrate Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s own “orthodoxy” and Sufi ideals. In addition, this chapter contributes to the debates on sectarianism. Chapter Three focuses on Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s attempt at constructing a popular piety by analyzing his work *Müzekki ün-Nüfus* (The Purifier of the Souls). This chapter analyzes how Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s ideas fit into the dichotomy of popular vs. high Islam. Chapter Four examines the

legacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi and analyzes how a later hagiographical source contributed to the image of Eşrefoğlu Rumi.

## **Chapter 1: A General Background**

### **1.1. Introduction**

This chapter will function as a general introduction to Ottoman<sup>1</sup> history, Eşrefoğlu Rumi and the historiography of these subjects. First, this chapter will elaborate on the socio-political scene in early Ottoman history. It will discuss some of the main debates in Ottoman historiography. Second, this chapter will elaborate on the cultural geography of “Rum” and the making of “Rumi identity” in Ottoman history and historiography. This section will elaborate upon the transformation of Rumi identity and the process of Islamization. Third, this chapter will provide a background on Rumi and Ottoman Islam. This section will discuss the diversity in the understanding of Islam in general and Sufism in particular. Similarly, it will analyze how the historiography discusses these concepts. Fourth, this chapter will discuss the narratives about Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s life and will elaborate on the works he wrote, while discussing the historiography regarding Eşrefoğlu Rumi.

### **1.2. A Brief Overview of the Early Ottoman History**

The Ottoman polity emerged within the context of late medieval political structures of Anatolia and the Balkans. After the territorial decline of the Seljuqs of Rum following their defeat by the Mongols in 1243, Anatolia was divided politically between a plethora of rival

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<sup>1</sup> And pre-Ottoman Anatolia and Balkan.

Turcoman principalities. The Ottomans emerged from this plethora of Turcoman emirates which controlled areas dominated by the former empire of the Seljuqs of Rum in Anatolia. In the northwest of Anatolia as well as in the parts of the southern Balkans, a territorially declining Byzantine Empire would still assert its influence over the politics of this region. However, its territories would soon diminish to several small islands or enclaves surrounded by foreign territories. The last Byzantine stronghold was the capital Constantinople with its immediate hinterland, which the Byzantines retained until the Ottoman conquest in 1453.<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning, the Ottoman emirate was not necessarily much different from the other principalities that dominated the region. They sought their independence from the Seljuqs and Mongols while trying to assert influence and control in the region. The emerging Ottoman polity was shaped by the fact that it was administering a population that was still demographically divided roughly equally between different Muslim groups and Orthodox Christians.<sup>3</sup> One characteristic that they had which differentiated them from most other principalities of the time was that they were right on the Byzantine border, and very close to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople. The frontier nature of this area of origin was influential in shaping the development of the Ottoman polity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This statement excludes the Empire of Trebizond (1204-1461). The Empire of Trebizond is sometimes considered a rival Byzantine polity. This polity was ruled by one of the famous Byzantine dynasties independently from the Byzantine center. A good study on the Empire of Trebizond, Anthony Bryer, "Greeks and Türkmens: A Pontic Exception" in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29, (1975), 113-149.

<sup>3</sup> Accurate census data is not necessarily present for this period. The 15<sup>th</sup> century is usually considered a milestone in the Islamization of Anatolia and the Ottoman Empire. After the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman state demographically became majority Muslim.

<sup>4</sup> Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 15.; Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 38-39.

The first rulers of the Ottoman emirate used their proximity to the Byzantine power to their advantage in the building of the Ottoman state. Some Byzantine lords allied themselves with the Ottomans.<sup>5</sup> These alliances of Ottoman and ex-Byzantine lords contributed to the success of the early Ottoman state formation.<sup>6</sup> Rather than excluding these ex-Byzantine elements, the Ottomans incorporated them into their new state.<sup>7</sup> Thus, they benefited from these alliances in their northwest Anatolian milieu to build a long lasting political power.<sup>8</sup> The Ottomans adopted certain Byzantine customs and traditions in order to establish a long lasting empire in Anatolia and Balkans.<sup>9</sup>

The Ottomans engaged in a conquest movement towards the Byzantine towns and countryside in northwest Anatolia and the Balkans. First, they conquered the smaller Byzantine towns and countryside in the northwestern Anatolian region of Bithynia.<sup>10</sup> The Ottomans established their capital in the Bithynian town of Bursa in 1326. Later, they gradually expanded to the rest of the Anatolian principalities by both conquest and peaceful territorial acquisition. Afterwards, the Ottoman crossing to the Balkans in 1354 gave them the opportunity to expand in this peninsula.<sup>11</sup> The Ottoman conquest movement followed the pendulum like structure of westward and eastward expansion from the center of their power in Bithynia towards to the rest

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<sup>5</sup> Tijana Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 21.

<sup>6</sup> Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 50, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Heath Lowry, *The Nature of Early Ottoman State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 130-131.

<sup>8</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 24-5; Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 69.

<sup>10</sup> The Ottoman polity was based in Bithynia.

<sup>11</sup> Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600* (London: Phoenix, 1973), 9.

of the Anatolian and Balkan peninsulas. The one major exception was the city of Constantinople, in which the Byzantines maintained control until the city's conquest in 1453.

One of the debates in the early Ottoman historiography is why it was the Ottomans and not one of the numerous other Anatolian Turcoman emirates, that ended up unifying these territories and eventually transformed to a successful and long lasting empire?<sup>12</sup> In other words, what was the reason for the Ottomans' success? For a long time, the historiography has looked at the earliest sources like Ahmedi's history of the Ottoman dynasty.<sup>13</sup> This source praises the Ottomans as successful holy warriors conducting holy war against Byzantium. Some Ottoman historians took the message of these works at face value. They interpreted these primary sources as if they meant that the Ottoman emirate was successful because bordering Byzantium, the emirate developed into a hub for holy war.<sup>14</sup>

The paradigm that Ottoman historians know as "ghazi thesis" is based on the idea that the early Ottoman state developed and expanded quickly because it became a hub for holy war.<sup>15</sup> The Ottoman historian Paul Wittek is known for the conceptualization of the ghazi paradigm.<sup>16</sup> According to this paradigm, the early Ottoman success can be explained by their zeal of holy war which not only motivated the Ottomans in this pursuit, but also attracted individuals from rival

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<sup>12</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmedi, *İskendernâme: Hasan Âli Yücel Klasikler Dizisi*, trans. Furkan Öztürk (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2018) 566-591.; Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 38.

<sup>15</sup> Ghaza is the word used for holy war, originates from the word ghazi (holy warrior).

<sup>16</sup> Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1938).

principalities who would join the Ottoman cause in the holy war against Byzantium. This paradigm became the dominant narrative for a long time in Ottoman historiography.<sup>17</sup>

Ottoman historiography gradually began to question and challenge the ghazi thesis.<sup>18</sup> Scholars began to reevaluate the motives of early Ottoman chroniclers such as Ahmedi.<sup>19</sup> Ahmedi (d.1413) wrote a history of the Ottoman dynasty in which he represented the Ottomans as holy warriors. A close and critical evaluation of the sources pointed out the representation of early Ottoman plunder as holy war (*ghaza*) by the sources like Ahmedi were influential in the making of the ghazi thesis.<sup>20</sup> Many studies have pointed out the important role that Orthodox Christians and ex-Byzantines played in the formation of the early Ottoman state.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the motivation of the early Ottomans were also reconsidered. They have questioned the role of the holy war as motivation for early Ottoman warriors. All these studies led to the reevaluation of the ghazi paradigm by attempting to look at the sources from different perspectives.<sup>22</sup> In the light of this reevaluation, the dominance of this paradigm was challenged and several other factors become widespread.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 11. Lowry, *The Nature of Early Ottoman State*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 55.

<sup>20</sup> Lowry, *The Nature of Early Ottoman State*, 45-54.

<sup>21</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 51.; Lowry suggests that Köse Mihal was still formally a Christian while being a “gazi.” Lowry, *The Nature of Early Ottoman State*, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Rudi Paul Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), 120. Lindner suggests that even in the cases of invention or fraud by the chroniclers, it is worth looking at why they are telling the stories they choose to tell.

<sup>23</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 49.



Apart from the *ghazi* paradigm, different scholars have emphasized different factors contributing to the early Ottoman success. Some scholars have mentioned flexibility, religious tolerance, mobility and fluidity of Ottoman frontiers, and alliance networks among the reasons why the Ottomans were successful in the establishment of the Ottoman state and longevity of their empire.<sup>24</sup> By the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottomans had developed and adopted advanced military technologies. This military strength, when combined with significant fiscal and administrative capabilities, gave the Ottomans an edge over their rivals.<sup>25</sup>

The Ottoman conquests shaped the future of Anatolia as well as the Balkans. These conquests not only meant that these areas now had new overlords to rule these regions, but also successful leadership which led the way to a long lasting “Pax Ottomana.” The Ottomans followed several strategies to keep the local elites as well as the local population satisfied with the new Ottoman rule as much as possible. These strategies included not implementing, at least initially, large scale changes in the administration of recently conquered areas. In other words, the local elites still continued to have an important role under the new administration, which meant they were incorporated to the new system without feeling that they had lost their prestigious position in society.<sup>26</sup> For the ordinary Ottoman subject, especially those living in the countryside, there was not a lot of change that they experienced in their daily lives. This fact made the transition of power to the Ottomans a relatively smooth one, benefitting the evolving Ottoman administration.

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<sup>24</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 31; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 140-1.

<sup>25</sup> Gabor Agoston. “Firearms and Military Adaption: The Ottomans and The European Military Revolution, 1450-1800,” *Journal of World History* 25, (2014): 122.

<sup>26</sup> Halil İnalcık, “Ottoman Methods of Conquest” *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103-129.

At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottomans were already successful at conquering significant parts of the southern Balkans and western Anatolia. They adopted Edirne (Adrianople) as their capital in the southeastern Balkans in 1361. However, a powerful rival in the beginning of 15<sup>th</sup> century would challenge the survival of the Ottoman state. Timur or Tamerlane, who would come to be known as the last great steppe conqueror in history, established his rule around the Iranian plateau and Central Asia.<sup>27</sup> By emulating Chinggis Khan, Timur engaged in a conquest movement, in which he eventually challenged the expanding Ottoman state. He threatened Ottoman rule in Anatolia and eventually defeated the Ottomans at the battle of Ankara at 1402. The defeat at Ankara did not lead to the demise of the Ottoman state. It did lead to a period of instability and well as civil war (1402-1413), in which rival brothers claimed the Ottoman throne and aimed to restore the unity of the Ottoman state.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Ankara, several Anatolian Turcoman principalities, which has been subjected to the Ottoman rule in the mid-to-late 14<sup>th</sup> century, saw a chance to revive their rule under Timurid suzerainty. These principalities were behind the Ottomans in their centralizing impulse and actual centralization efforts.<sup>28</sup> In order to survive the Ottoman expansion, they benefited from alliances with the Timurid Empire.<sup>29</sup> These principalities shared similar semi-nomadic origins with Timur. Additionally, Timur would give them a chance to not be swallowed by the Ottoman conquests in Anatolia and restore their independence from the

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<sup>27</sup> Beatriz Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory*, 53. Lindner discusses how environment of Bythnia influenced the Ottomans' sedentarization.

<sup>29</sup> Dimitris Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War 1402-13* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2.

Ottomans. At the same time, the Ottoman allies in the Balkans fought against the Timurids more loyally than the Turcoman principalities of Anatolia. This fact demonstrates that the Ottomans were already successful at integrating Balkan elements during the 14<sup>th</sup> century and had effectively become a new Rumi state<sup>30</sup> in the fashion of the Byzantine Empire, controlling both peninsulas.<sup>31</sup>

At the Battle of Ankara, the Ottomans were defeated by the Timurids. This defeat led to a period of civil war for the Ottomans between 1402 and 1413. In this period, several princes were looking to establish control in the former Ottoman territories and become the new Ottoman ruler. Later, this era would be known as an interregnum, in which the Ottoman princes engaged in a civil war to dominate each other to claim the Ottoman throne. After fighting and defeating his brothers, in 1413, Mehmed I would end this period. Under the rule of Mehmed I, the Ottomans consolidated their rule and restored their unity.

The Ottoman civil war among the sons of Bayezid I, the ruler defeated and imprisoned by Timur, was partly possible because of the Turco-Mongol tradition which treats the realm as the possession of the entire family of the ruler.<sup>32</sup> Because of this, all the sons of Bayezid I had a claim to the throne. One policy under Timurid suzerainty was to keep the Ottomans divided into realms ruled by different brothers, all sons of Bayezid. However, with the consolidation of territory under Mehmed I's rule in 1413, the Ottomans emphasized once more the importance

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<sup>30</sup> I use the term a Rumi state in the meaning of a state which dominates most of the lands of Rum i.e. the two peninsulas of Anatolia and Balkans. See section 1.2.

<sup>31</sup> Heath Lowry, *The Nature of Early Ottoman State*, 130-131.

<sup>32</sup> Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 4.

they attached to the unity of their realm. Instead of each brother taking one piece of the realm and ruling it independently from others, the winning brother would administer the entire Ottoman state.

The Ottoman recognition of the claim of each competing brother suggests suggests a link to the Turco-Mongol tradition of family rule. However, they updated this original Turco-Mongol tradition to emphasize the unity of the realm, which increased the longevity of their empire as compared with short lived steppe empires. This strategy also increased the possibility of civil war, because it meant that each time a sultan died, there were multiple candidates with equal claim to the throne. Mehmed I defended the position of the Ottomans emphasis on the keeping the integrity of the realm against the Timurid pressure to keep them divided. Mehmed I even defended this shift of the Ottomans away from the steppe tradition as necessary for the existence of an Islamic empire in the frontiers of Islamdom.<sup>33</sup> At the end of this period, the Ottomans would emerge stronger, and their empire would be long lasting compared with the short lived Timurid Empire. It would also symbolize the Ottomans' partial break with the steppe tradition and transformation into a new kind of polity blending the Roman, Islamic, and steppe (Turkic) elements.<sup>34</sup>

The status of the Ottoman ruler reflected the power structure of Ottoman society. In the beginning, the Ottomans had nomadic and semi-nomadic origins. In the early Ottoman state, the Ottoman "Bey" was no more than a "primus inter pares." In other words, the first rulers were

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<sup>33</sup> Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 204-5.

<sup>34</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 71, 74.

military leaders who were accompanied by other powerful Ottoman lords<sup>35</sup> in battle. These successful families were either of semi-nomadic Turcoman origin or ex-Byzantine lords. The history of the early Ottoman state is a history of the transition of from a frontier principality to a bureaucratic and centralized empire. With this transition, the power of the Ottoman ruler vis-à-vis the political elite of the country was going to increase tremendously.

The Ottoman rulers gradually began to adopt policies of empire building which gradually increased the power and status gap between the sultan and the rest of the powerful families. The most important of these policies would be the introduction of the devshirme system. This system was designed to recruit important segments of Ottoman army (the Janissary corps) as well as bureaucrats from the Christian peasants of the Balkans. These peasant children were converted to Islam and initially sent to live with Turkish speaking peasant families. Afterwards, they were given an education depending on their potential area of service, i.e. to bureaucracy or military. This system was intended to create a bureaucracy and army that was first and foremost loyal to the person of the sultan, who represented the Ottoman state. Gradually, the bulk of the Ottoman army and bureaucracy came to be composed of individuals from devshirme background, rather than Turcomans of nomadic and semi-nomadic origins. This system would gradually disenfranchise the powerful families that held important power in the administration and military of the Ottoman state.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Bey* means Lord in Ottoman Turkish.

<sup>36</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 77.

The groups that were disenfranchised by the new policies of empire building and centralization were the nomadic or semi-nomadic populations of Anatolia and Balkans. These groups were very influential in the establishment of the Ottoman emirate as well as in the conquest movement that followed it. The Ottoman dynasty itself shared the same semi-nomadic background as these populations. Similarly, some of the powerful families that I have mentioned above also possessed semi-nomadic and nomadic backgrounds. Sedentarization was an important trend in the centralization and bureaucratization processes that occurred within the context of empire building.

With these developments, nomadic and semi-nomadic populations gradually found themselves mattering less and less to the Ottoman central administration and warfare practices of the empire. In many cases, they were forced to move to the frontiers of the empire. A new bureaucracy and military mostly recruited from the devshirme system would replace the functions that were previously performed by these groups. The semi-nomadic populations would suffer from the centralization and bureaucratization of the Ottoman Empire. Their loss of their prestige became an important factor that motivated them to express their discontent towards the Ottoman center.<sup>37</sup> The Ottoman center, in some cases, was successful at incorporating these populations to the sedentary life and to the framework of Ottoman government in Anatolia and Balkans.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Halil İnalcık, "Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of the Otman Baba Vilayetnamesi" in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 24; Nikolay Antov, *The Ottoman "Wild West": The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 71.

<sup>38</sup> Antov, *The Ottoman "Wild West,"* 147.

There were several instances in the history of the early Ottoman state, where some segments of the Ottoman population expressed their discontent with the processes of centralization and sedentarization. One of the most famous examples to this kind of expression manifested itself with the rebellion of Shaykh Bedreddin (d.1420) in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Shaykh Bedreddin was able to rally around diverse populations which experienced disenfranchisement for different reasons.<sup>39</sup> This diverse coalition included both semi-nomadic Turcoman populations and disenfranchised non-Muslim populations.<sup>40</sup> Shaykh Bedreddin was able to unite these populations with a socially and religiously egalitarian vision, which is sometimes seen as proto-socialism by some scholars.<sup>41</sup>

The Ottoman success brought more challenges to the Byzantine state as the Ottomans spread to the Balkans in the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Byzantines continued to loose territories until they lost their capital of Constantinople. Gradually, the process of replacement of Byzantium in the Anatolian and Balkan provinces by the Ottomans was completed with the conquests of Constantinople in 1453 and Trebizond in 1461. Thus, the transformation of Ottoman frontier principality into a new “Rumi” empire would be complete by the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century. Anatolia and the Balkans would be considered the core regions of the Ottoman Empire. The greater part of these two essential regions of the empire would be administered directly from the capital Constantinople rather than ruled indirectly by powerful governors of semi-independent provinces.

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<sup>39</sup> Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Barkey, *Empire of Difference*, 173.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

A new trend in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman polity was the process of centralization and the transformation of the Ottoman state from a frontier principality to the new “Rumi” Empire by replacing Byzantium. The most symbolic milestone in this shift was the conquest of Constantinople and its subsequent transformation into the Ottoman capital. After the conquest, the Ottomans began to implement several policies to restore the imperial grandeur that Constantinople had possessed under the earlier Byzantine rule.<sup>42</sup> In order to achieve this objective, the Ottoman state began a process of forced re-settlements of different religious and ethnic groups to repopulate the empire’s new capital.<sup>43</sup> The imperial capital was transformed as it incorporated newcomer populations and had many of its buildings repurposed and/or re-assigned to new owners. Several large scale projects were implemented to rebrand the new capital for its new rulers. Among these projects were building a new palace structure, conversion of the great cathedral of Hagia Sophia into a mosque, a new imperial mosque complex as well as a new covered bazaar.

These processes also led to an increase in the production in the arts, sciences, literature, religion and many other areas as well. In this period, works written in the Turkish language increased. At the same time, just like the Ottoman state was transitioning to an empire, a need to discuss history, contextualize and legitimize the role of the Ottoman dynasty emerged as well. For this reason, not surprisingly, a new interest in writing histories (of the world as well as the

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<sup>42</sup> The demographic decline of Constantinople is stark especially from the fourth crusade to the Ottoman conquest.

Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 117, 183-6-7, 222.

<sup>43</sup> Halil İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 18.



Ottomans) developed. The history of Aşıkpaşazade, *Kitab-ı Cihannüma* by Neşri, the *Düsturname* of Enveri and many others were written in this period. These works represent a new desire to reflect, reinterpret and discuss the Ottoman past. Some attempted to connect it with history of other dynasties as well.

It is also no surprise that a new interest in the basics of Islamic faith as well as Sufism increased in this period. The number of informative works about Islamic rituals and practice, as well as collections of Sufi poetry, manuals, and hagiographic literature also increased in this period.<sup>44</sup> The literature that Eşrefoğlu Rumi and others contributed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century can be understood within this context.<sup>45</sup>

Especially from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, many of the works in history, religion, literature, and many other subjects were written in Ottoman Turkish. Previously, in the Ottoman Empire, many of the works have been written in the more established literary languages of the Islamic world such as Arabic and Persian.<sup>46</sup> The emergence of Ottoman Turkish as a written language meant that it was on the path of becoming a major language of culture in Islamdom during this period.

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<sup>44</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 26-29.

<sup>45</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 27. Krstic discusses this proliferation by connecting with the concept of textual or interpretative community.

<sup>46</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 26.

### 1.3. Rum and Rumi Identity

#### 1.3.1. Being a Rumi

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is referred to as “Rumi” because of his ties to the lands of Rum.<sup>47</sup> In this section, I will try to establish the connections between the lands of Rum and the Rumi identity which existed at the time of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. At first glance, the Rumi identity of the time and the personality of Eşrefoğlu Rumi do not necessarily seem related with each other, except the obvious fact that Rumi is named after the lands of Rum, where he was born and raised. People could be associated with Rum even if they were not originally from the region. It has been said that Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s father was from Egypt.<sup>48</sup> In spite of this fact, he was considered “Rumi.” It was not necessary for one to hail from the land of Rum to become known as “Rumi.”

“Rum” as a geographical entity denotes the Roman lands. In medieval period, it was used to indicate the lands ruled by the Byzantine empire centered in Constantinople. Rum was used to denote the lands from approximately the lower Danube to the Euphrates river.<sup>49</sup> In the pre-modern era, it has been customary to refer to an individual by emphasizing their connection to a certain geographical unit. Scholars refer to Mustafa Ali’s comments to discuss the Ottoman

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<sup>47</sup> Here, I am mostly referring to the Rumi lands to denote Anatolia and the Balkans. Throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman state gradually expanded to most of the Anatolia and the Balkans. Thus, I am referring to a geographical unit that encompasses these two names.

<sup>48</sup> Abdullah Veliyyuddin Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade: Eşrefoğlu Rumi’nin Menkıbeleri* ed. Abdullah Uçman (Istanbul: Kitabev: 2009), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Sofia has been referred to as “the extremity of Rum.” Christopher Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 75.

Rumi identity that existed in 16th-17th centuries, which referred to a cultural identity based on the imperial culture of the Ottoman Empire as well as peoples living in the core territories of the Ottoman Empire, i.e. Anatolia and the Balkans.<sup>50</sup>

The establishment of Islamic polities in Anatolia and their expansion into the Balkans did not mean an end of the Rumi identity but instead a transformation from Byzantine to Muslim rule. “Rumi” identity, in its new form, continued to exist in the same geographical milieu until modern times when the rise of nationalism led to the decline of the concept of “Rum” and “Rumi” identity.<sup>51</sup> Prior to the rise of modern nationalism, terms such as Turkey or Greece were only being used in the West. With modern nationalism, the emerging Greek and Turkish nations and their homelands were renamed.<sup>52</sup>

The decline of the usage of Rum also led to a change in how the historiography discusses the Rumi identity. As Salih Özbaran has demonstrated, Ottoman scholars have interpreted the adjective “Rumi” in different ways, such as “Greek” or “Turkish.”<sup>53 54</sup> Michel Balivet remarks upon the usage of Rumi in the contexts of Greek and Turkish.<sup>55</sup> Today, a modern historian does not necessarily need to explain the medieval or early modern usages of geographical unit such as

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<sup>50</sup> Cemal Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own: Reflections on Cultural Geography and Identity in the Lands of Rum” *Muqarnas* 24 (2007): 11-12.

<sup>51</sup> Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own,” 18.

<sup>52</sup> Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own,” 9, 18-19, 21.

<sup>53</sup> Salih Özbaran, *Bir Osmanlı Kimliği: 14.-17. Yüzyıllarda Rum/Rumi Aidiyet ve İmgeleri* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), 47-8.

<sup>54</sup> Rum also meant Greek. Kafadar’s discussion about the coexistence of two meanings: Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own,” 11.

<sup>55</sup> Michel Balivet, *Romanie Byzantine et Pays du Rum Turc: Histoire d’un Espace d’Imbrication Greco-Turque* (İstanbul: Les Editions Isis, 1994), 2.

Iran, China or Egypt. There are modern nation states founded on the premise of the continuous existence of these historical regions. Without the existence of a modern Rumi nation state, modern scholars have translated the term “Rumi” as “Turkish,” “Ottoman,” or “Greek” depending on the context. These translations are mostly anachronistic and do not reflect the connotations that the word “Rumi” possesses.

In more recent decades, scholars have begun to investigate the “Rumi” identity that was discarded in the wake of nationalism in the lands of Rum. The works of Kafadar and Özbaran have pointed out a need to re-emphasize a long forgotten and substantial identity that has been avoided in modern times.<sup>56</sup> Today, many scholars have begun to re-investigate the mentalities and cultural histories of the medieval and early modern identities of the region.<sup>57</sup>

The life and legacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi has been shaped by the transformations that the lands of Rum were experiencing in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. What did being a “Rumi” mean when this identity was undergoing transformation in a new imperial setting in the 15<sup>th</sup> century? Why did he embrace a pen name which included “Rumi” in his divan? Could his own contribution to the transformation of the Rumi identity be analyzed with his adoption of Eşrefoğlu Rumi pen name? Whether his adoption of “Rumi” name was a deliberate reference to the “new Rumi identity” or not, Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s world was connected with the transformations that were occurring in the lands of Rum in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>56</sup> Özbaran, *Bir Osmanlı Kimliği*, 23.; Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own,” 21.

<sup>57</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 67.

### 1.3.2. Transformation of Rum and Rumi Identity

During the late medieval era, the different Turkish, and later Ottoman, polities spread to Anatolia and the Balkans, which gradually led these territories to be considered parts of *dar al-Islam*. The essential process of Islamization of Anatolia took place from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>58</sup> The processes that will be referred to Turkification and Islamization transformed the social, ethnic, and religious composition of the peninsula. Similarly, the Islamization of the Balkans began in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century when Ottoman rule was first established in the Gallipoli Peninsula. In contrast to Anatolia, the Balkans as a whole never became majority Muslim. Early on in Ottoman history, parts of the Balkans quickly Islamized and significant Muslim populations have lived in the Balkans since the first Ottoman conquests in the 14<sup>th</sup> century although they never became a majority. The Balkans, an area traditionally divided between the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches, was further religiously divided with the arrival of Islam into the region.

The process of Islamization could have different meanings. How can one define the process of Islamization? Is it enough to call a geographical unit “Islamized” when more than half of the population is affiliated with the Muslim creed? Is it instead a loose affiliation of the ruler with the Islamic faith enough for a polity to be called Islamic? Or does Islamization mean

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<sup>58</sup> Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh Through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), vii.

that the ruler has to implement a particular kind of Islamic political structure in the administration of the state?

Some scholars favored using Islamic terminology to describe the word Islamization. According to this strategy, the polities that were ruled by Islamic dynasties were considered *dar al-Islam* in the Islamic tradition. Thus, polities which belonged to the *dar al-Islam* have been considered as being part of the Islamic world. Nikolay Antov suggests the formal Muslim conquest of an area represents the inclusion of a certain territory to *dar al-Islam*.<sup>59</sup>

Another approach to Islamization could focus on the number of the converts to this religion and could consider Islamization to be the process of gradual conversions to Islam within a polity. Conversions to Islam could be seen as one way in which the Islamization process occurred in the late medieval and early modern Anatolia and the Balkans. Therefore, a substantial surge in the conversion rates towards Islam in a particular geographical entity could be interpreted as “Islamization.”

In contrast to the Islamization of population, Islamization could also mean the Islamization of space, i.e. Islamization of a particular territory.<sup>60</sup> The conversion of certain religious structures from churches to mosques, from monasteries to dervish lodges as well as the erection of new Islamic buildings can be seen as examples of the Islamization of space. The

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<sup>59</sup> Antov, *The Ottoman “Wild West,”* 255.

<sup>60</sup> Antov, *The Ottoman “Wild West,”* 116.

implementation of Islamic call to prayer and public celebration of Islamic festivals could also function as symbolic marker of Islamization of a certain geographical unit.

The process of Islamization should not be seen as an inevitable progression in one direction. Scholars have provided examples in which different Turks and Turkish communities adopted Christianity in the late medieval era. Balivet presents the example of Suleyman ibn Kutulmus, as well as other Turkish individuals who “Byzantinized” and adopted Orthodox Christianity.<sup>61</sup> Kafadar points out some Turkish communities adopting Christianity, but concludes that the effect of these groups were marginal compared to the adoption of Islam and Turkish identity of larger masses.<sup>62</sup> Balivet asks the question of whether political and conflictual explanations are enough to explain the adoption of Islam in the case of Circassian, Cretan, Bosnian, Albanian communities and the adoption of Christianity in the Turkic-speaking Gagaouz and Karamanlı communities.<sup>63</sup>

These examples demonstrate that from 11<sup>th</sup> century on, Anatolia experienced a process of Islamization, which was not a unilinear and inevitable process with one direction. Rather, it occurred over centuries in which the Orthodox Christian and Muslim spaces coexisted and influenced each other. The political development of the Ottoman state, i.e. its evolution to an empire in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, shaped the fate of this process, making the Islamization of the peninsula an indisputable fact.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Balivet, *Romanie Byzantine et Pays du Rum Turc*, 32.

<sup>62</sup> Kafadar, “A Rome of One’s Own,” 14.

<sup>63</sup> Balivet, *Romanie Byzantine et Pays du Rum Turc*, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, vii.

The adoption of Islam by the ruling classes and its utilization as a legitimizing device and ideological structure can be seen as policy of Islamization. According to this perspective, the Ottoman state experienced Islamization from early on. However, this Islamization would reach a new level particularly in the late 15th and 16th centuries. This understanding of Islamization considers the alliance and cooperation of a growing Islamic establishment and transformation of the Ottoman state into an empire.<sup>65</sup>

In studies about the Islamization of Anatolia and the Balkans, scholars have elaborated on concepts such as cultural exchange and syncretism. Scholars have utilized these concepts to describe different processes by which different religious traditions interacted with each other during this period.<sup>66</sup> The abundance of religious transformation and the frontier status of Anatolia and the Balkans has led scholars to focus on the concept of syncretism which became abundant in the Ottoman historiography.<sup>67</sup> Krstic suggests that the scholars have emphasized the concept of syncretism in Ottoman historiography to downplay the ubiquity of *ghaza* related interpretations and to boost the image of an inclusive and tolerant Ottoman Empire.<sup>68</sup> The studies about syncretism assume that Islamization is a gradual process in which people of different religious traditions find an atmosphere conducive to conversion if their new faith includes some characteristics of their old one.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 48-49.

<sup>66</sup> Irene Melikoff, *Sur Les Traces du Soufisme Turc* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1992), 46-47.

<sup>67</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 16.

<sup>68</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 17.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 35.



Karamustafa studies the process of Islamization by referencing the epic of *Saltukname*. He claims that the Islamic identity described in the epic is integrated into the Christian identity of the time and geographical unit. Karamustafa interprets the understanding of Christianity and Islam similar to communal political affiliation. In his study of *Saltukname*, he points out that the references to doctrinal aspects of these religions are very limited.<sup>70</sup> Karamustafa claims that, like Muslim leaders, Christian leaders attempted to subdue their opponents, which Sarı Saltık attempted to realize in the epic.<sup>71</sup>

The transformations in Anatolia and the Balkans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century led to the construction of an Islamic Empire, i.e. the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was based on the core regions of Anatolia and the Balkans. When the Ottoman state become an empire these regions transformed from frontier areas of Islamdom into the core areas of a major Islamic empire. In a cultural sense, becoming a Rumi gradually began to be something more than belonging to former Roman/Byzantine cultural realm under the new Islamic empire. This new meaning of Rumi identity was now shaped by the Islamic religion as well as an affiliation to the Ottoman cultural realm.<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, in the geographical sense, being a Rumi continued to denote membership or affiliation to the core regions the the “Roman” polity, i.e. Anatolia and the

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<sup>70</sup> Ahmet T. Karamustafa, “Islamisation through the Lens of the Saltuk-name” in *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock, Bruno de Nicola and Sara Nur Yıldız, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 359- 360.

<sup>71</sup> Karamustafa, “Islamisation,” 361.

<sup>72</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 74.

Balkans. Turkish-speaking Muslim individuals living in Anatolia referred to themselves as Rumi in medieval times and continued to do so until modern times and the rise of nationalism. In the aftermath of the conquest of Constantinople the Ottoman state adopted some Roman/Byzantine customs. The result of these transformations was a new imperial identity that was Muslim, Turkish-speaking, shaped by the culture of Anatolia and the Balkans, and included Roman/Byzantine elements. Could the rise of Ottoman Turkish language as an elite *lingua franca* be interpreted as a result of these transformations?

#### **1.4. A Background on Rumi/ Ottoman Islam**

##### **1.4.1. Rumi Islam and Islamic High Culture**

What was the framework of Islam in Anatolia and the Balkans before the 16<sup>th</sup> century? Scholars have utilized terms such as *religious syncretism*, *heterodoxy*, *Islamization*, popular *Islam*, and *folk Islam* to discuss this religious framework of this period.<sup>73</sup> What were the main characteristics of Rumi/Ottoman<sup>74</sup> Islam in the 15<sup>th</sup> century? The answer to this question is closely related to the debate about Islamization of the lands of Rum. The Turkification and Islamization processes that had started in Anatolia in the 11-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, reached a milestone roughly around the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when most of the population had become Turkish-speaking and

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<sup>73</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 16-17.; Karamustafa, "Islamisation," 349-364.

<sup>74</sup> Here, I am mostly referring to the Rumi lands to denote Anatolia and the Balkans. Throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman state gradually expanded to most of the Anatolia and the Balkans. Thus, I am referring to a geographical unit that encompasses these two names.

Muslim.<sup>75</sup> In the Balkans, by contrast, these processes began in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and by the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, Turkish and Muslim populations were still a very small minority. Despite the limited size of the Turkish-speaking and Muslim populations, the Balkans became part of the *dar al-Islam* (The Abode of Islam)<sup>76</sup> under the Ottoman Empire, and Ottoman Turkish became the language of the administrative elite within the Empire.

From the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the institutions of the emerging “Ottoman high Islamic culture” such as state-sponsored madrasas and some urban dervish lodges, educated, employed, and sponsored a self-sustaining Ottoman Islamic establishment.<sup>77</sup> This proliferation of Ottoman religious institutions brought Ottoman high culture into Anatolia and the Balkans where it interacted with the local population. This process allowed for the development of local and regional high Islamic cultures.<sup>78</sup> Scholars have pointed out that Islamization and Sunnitization are historical processes that are results of certain intellectual accumulation of religious culture and education.<sup>79</sup> In this context, scholars and Sufi figures such as Eşrefoğlu Rumi contributed to the spread of a certain religious culture and Sufi education among the Ottoman population.

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<sup>75</sup> Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*.; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, “Kaygusuz Abdal: A Medieval Turkish Saint and the Formation of Vernacular Islam in Anatolia” in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 338.

<sup>76</sup> Dar al-Islam (The Abode of Islam) refers to the territories governed by Islamic governments and according to Islamic principles. In the Islamic tradition, this term coexists with the term dar al-Harb (Abode of War) which refers to the territories that are not governed by Islamic governments and by Islamic principles.

<sup>77</sup> Abdurrahman Atcil, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 5.

<sup>78</sup> Karamustafa, “Kaygusuz Abdal,” 329-42.

<sup>79</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 26-27.; Derin Terzioğlu, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization: A Historiographical Discussion,” *Turcica* 44, (2012-2013): 302.

The madrasas as well as Sufi brotherhoods can also be viewed in this context. In early Ottoman history and pre-Ottoman history of Anatolia and the Balkans, individuals who were willing to pursue a career in Sufism as well as learn the Islamic sciences went to find teachers or masters in the “core” territories of the Islamic world. Greater Syria as well as Egypt became destinations for early Ottoman disciples in these fields. Eşrefoğlu Rumi himself went to Hama (in Syria) to complete his education in the convent affiliated with the Qadiri Sufi order. The first part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as a period in which Sufi disciples and scholars looked for career paths travelled outside of the lands of Rum to advance their careers.

From the reign of Mehmed II onwards, the establishment of new madrasas and Sufi brotherhoods (with their convents) increasingly reduced the disciples’ needs to travel outside of the core regions of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, during the reign of Selim I and Süleyman I most of the Arabic-speaking Middle East became part of the Ottoman Empire. This change resulted in the Ottoman capital playing a more seminal role in the development of Islamic culture and institutions. In the decades following Mehmed II’s conquest of Constantinople, the new Ottoman capital transformed into a leading center of high Islamic culture.

The emergence of a class of ulama in an Islamic polity is an important aspect of the development of Islamic institutions in that polity. Anatolia had had madrasas since the times of Seljuqs of Rum. However, scholars usually point to the 15<sup>th</sup> century as the period when a distinct Anatolian (Rumi) ulama emerged. Atçıl claims the numbers of scholars who were entirely

educated in the lands of Rum increased. Atçıl suggests that the region's political stability, the presence of high-level scholars, and the establishment of well-funded royal madrasas contributed to this transformation. For this reason, he claims that the scholars "began to move in the direction of being self-sufficient" in 15<sup>th</sup> century Rum.<sup>80</sup>

The transformations that developed the empire into a center of high Islamic culture can be seen in some instances as the result of state sponsorship and the development of an imperial ideology that would correspond to the ambitions of an emerging empire. However, to what extent individual Sufi groups and shaykhs contributed to this account has not been sufficiently researched. Could vernacularization only be interpreted as a state-sponsored project or could individual authors and shaykhs deserve credit in this transformation?<sup>81</sup>

Ahmet Karamustafa studies Kaygusuz Abdal and his works from the perspective of emergence of a Turkish vernacular Islam in the provincial and latitudinarian sense.<sup>82</sup> Karamustafa claims that this abdal piety, shaped in the time of Kaygusuz Abdal, was a significant stream from which Alevi Bektashi tradition emerged. Karamustafa argues that the abdal piety, as represented by Kaygusuz Abdal, claimed to be the Turkish vernacular piety

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<sup>80</sup> Abdurrahman Atçıl, "Mobility of Scholars and Formation of a Self-Sustaining Scholarly System in the Lands of Rum during the Fifteenth Century," in *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century Anatolia*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız (Würzburg: Orient-Institut Istanbul, 2016), 316.

<sup>81</sup> Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Saqshbandīs in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).; John J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).; Side Emre, *Ibrahim-i Gulshani and the Khalwati-Gulshani Order: Power Brokers in Ottoman Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

<sup>82</sup> Karamustafa, "Kaygusuz Abdal," 331.

emerged in the provinces and which defined itself by opposing the Persian-speaking urban Sufis. Through this process, according to Karamustafa, the vernacular approach discarded a sharia-oriented understanding of Islam.<sup>83</sup>

In the cities of Rum, an organization that crossed mercantile, religious, and social boundaries had been developed since the early days of the Turkish Muslim rule in Anatolia. The *futuwwa*<sup>84</sup> organization, also referred to as the organization of the Akhis, played a leading role in the conduct of commerce and the urban crafts. At the same time, they developed sophisticated ceremonial, rituals and moral codes to differentiate themselves and developed unique moral principles. Some scholars suggest that the Akhis offered an alternative organization to the syncretic Turkmen or Christian pieties.<sup>85</sup>

The debate about the vernacularization of a Turkish form of Islam is also related to the emergence of the Ottoman Turkish as a language of culture in the Islamic world. Turkish speaking Islamic dynasties ruled different parts of the Islamic world from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. However, the emergence of the new Ottoman imperial order in the 15<sup>th</sup> century has usually been portrayed a watershed moment in the development of the Ottoman Turkish language. For this reason, the vernacularization of Ottoman Islam and the vernacularization of the Ottoman Turkish language could be considered two different aspects of the same process.

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<sup>83</sup> Karamustafa, “Kaygusuz Abdal,” 338.

<sup>84</sup> Organizations of urban young men (deriving from the Arabic word *fata*) that existed during the medieval and early modern period in the Islamic world.

<sup>85</sup> Lindner, *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory*, 5.

Scholars have pointed out an increase in the works written by Ottoman authors in Ottoman Turkish in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>86</sup> This increase illustrates the development of the language as well as the process of imperial transition including an increase in the support of the arts and literature. The perspective of imperial transition acknowledges the political support given to the works. However, not all of the writings that emerged during this time enjoyed political sponsorship. For this reason, although state sponsorship and imperial patronage were crucial in the development of a vernacular Islam and Ottoman Turkish language, the contributions of non-state actors should also be taken into consideration.

#### **1.4.2. The Making of Rumi/Ottoman Islam**

What characterized the Rumi/Ottoman<sup>87</sup> Islam that existed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century? The answer for this question is not dissimilar to the debate about Islamization of the lands of Rum. In other words, the characteristics of Rumi/Ottoman Islam are related to its definition and conceptualization. The difficulty of defining such a vast concept has led some scholars to define it in terms of plurality by emphasizing different components. Using this analytical framework facilitates the work of the scholars. However, at the same time, it complicates things in the sense that it leads to the understanding that the components are clearly differentiated from each other. For instance, strict dichotomization of high Islam versus popular Islam could exaggerate the differences between these understandings of Islam. Nevertheless, the categorizations of high and

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<sup>86</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 41.

<sup>87</sup> Here, I am mostly referring to the Rumi lands to denote Anatolia and Balkans. Throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman state gradually expanded to most of the Anatolia and Balkans. Thus, I am using the term Rum to denote both of these peninsulas.

popular still prove useful within discussions of religion. Scholars may reevaluate the definitions of such concepts while using the terminology.

The historiography of Ottoman Turkish literature has occasionally compartmentalized the Turkish language and literature in this period by differentiating between courtly and popular.<sup>88</sup> In some cases, the literature of the dervishes (tekke) or Sufism is added as a third layer to the to the “high” (divan) versus “popular” approach.

#### **a. Islam: One or Many?**

A multi-layered understanding of literature has affected the approaches to studies of Islam as well. In some cases, the state or the official realm is interpreted as another layer to characterize and shape the understanding of Islam. For instance, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak cites popular, high, official, as well as Sufi Islam as components of Ottoman Islam.<sup>89</sup> Even though Ocak acknowledges the problematic nature of separating aspects of Islam, he favors a perspective which distinguishes between the popular and official interpretations of religion in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>90</sup> Ocak states that, in spite of some overlapping features,<sup>91</sup> madrasa centered Islam and Sufi (tekke) centered Islam were at odds in the Ottoman Empire. Is scholars’ use of

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<sup>88</sup> Hatice Aynur, “Ottoman literature,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Volume 3, The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 500.

<sup>89</sup> Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Yeniçağlar Anadolu’sunda İslam’ın Ayak İzleri: Osmanlı Dönemi* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2011), 84.

<sup>90</sup> Ocak, *Yeniçağlar*, 85.

<sup>91</sup> Ocak, *Yeniçağlar*, 87.



this compartmentalization still relevant to the study of Islam? Does it facilitate our understanding of a vast concept or hinders our grasp of it by emphasizing the divergences?

Can we interpret madrasa Islam or the high Islam as an elite version of the same religion? Historians have pointed out various examples of members of the Ottoman ulama in the early period who were also active in different Sufi orders. This suggests that, madrasa Islam and Sufi Islam could, at least in some cases, be seen as representing complementary or alternative understandings of the same doctrine. The duty of the ulama is seen as enforcer of religious and cultural unity.<sup>92</sup> Historians also found distinctions between urban and rural Islam.<sup>93</sup>

## **b. Sufism**

Interpreting sufism as alternative or complementary piety hinders scholars' understanding of the studies of Islam. According to many Sufis, their own version of Sufism should be interpreted as the "correct" version of Islam. These Sufis would understand this to be true regardless of whether they are considered "sharia-minded" or "non-sharia-minded."<sup>94</sup> A more accurate understanding of Islam and Sufism can be reached when these concepts are interpreted as more integral, rather than exclusive concepts.

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<sup>92</sup> Madeline Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Postclassical Age 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988), 26.

<sup>93</sup> Antov, *The Ottoman "Wild West,"* 12.

<sup>94</sup> Such in the case of Eşrefoğlu Rumi.

The development of Sufism in the lands of Rum is interpreted together with Turkification, Islamization, and Islamic expansionism in historiography. The beginning of the organization of the Sufi groups in Anatolia occurred in a parallel way with the peninsula's Turkification.<sup>95</sup> It has also been argued that the Mongol invasions contributed to the penetration and development of many Sufi orders in Anatolia. The early orders developed with the emergence of charismatic shaykhs beginning in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Mongol invasions as well as the migrations of Turkic peoples into Anatolia and Western Asia can be seen as important milestones that facilitated the Turkification and Islamization processes that developed in these regions.<sup>96</sup>

In the historiography, the processes of Turkification and Islamization have been discussed in reference to the development of Sufi orders in the lands of Rum. Some scholars suggested the Sufi figures, and dervishes played a significant role in the conquest and Islamization of Anatolia, and the Balkans.<sup>97</sup> The construction of *dergahs* or dervish lodges and the dissemination of Sufi brotherhoods into Anatolia and the Balkans was significant in the integration of these regions into the Islamic cultural landscape. The ideas of historians such as Köprülü and Barkan became influential in the interpretation of Sufism in this period. From this perspective, the Sufi orders were seen as popularizing Islamizers which attempted to spread Islamic religion (as well as Turkish language and culture) and convert a Christian space and individuals to this new faith.

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<sup>95</sup> Resul Ay, *Anadolu'da Derviş ve Toplum: 13-15. Yüzyıllar* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2012), 16.

<sup>96</sup> Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler I: İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler," *Vakıflar Dergisi* 2, (1942): 281.

<sup>97</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 45.

Sufism has been attributed a foundational role in the making of the early Ottoman state. Barkan attempts to explain the rapid expansion of the early Ottoman state. While doing so, he criticizes the views of “scholars like Gibbons” who ascribe a significant role of Byzantine and Greek traditions and peoples in the formation of the early state.<sup>98</sup> He argues that the early Ottomans provided necessary manpower for the establishment of the Ottoman state.<sup>99</sup> According to Barkan, the manpower derived from the Turkish aristocracy and officials who had previously belong to the Seljuq administration. Barkan suggests that the earlier Ottoman Sufi organizations could be seen as knights and missionaries.<sup>100</sup>

Some of the arguments developed by Barkan are based on the works of Fuad Köprülü, who established a nationalist interpretation of the Islamization and Turkification of Anatolia and the Balkans.<sup>101</sup> Many scholars have been influenced by this paradigm. However, in the recent decades, there have been studies critical of the so-called Köprülü paradigm.<sup>102</sup> It has been argued that two diametrically opposed perspectives of Islamization have influenced the scholars. They suggest that Vryonis and Hasluck endorsed the destructive and syncretic aspects of the Islamization of Christian space in Anatolia.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Barkan, “Vakıflar ve Temlikler,” 279.

<sup>99</sup> Barkan, “Vakıflar ve Temlikler,” 282.

<sup>100</sup> Barkan, “Vakıflar ve Temlikler,” 282.

<sup>101</sup> Antov, *The Ottoman “Wild West,”* 42.

<sup>102</sup> A.C.S. Peacock, Bruno de Nicola and Sara Nur Yıldız, “Introduction,” in *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia*, ed. A.C.S. Peacock, Bruno de Nicola and Sara Nur Yıldız, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 5-7.

<sup>103</sup> Peacock, de Nicola and Yıldız, “Introduction,” 7.

In the aftermath of the Mongol invasions, numerous prominent Sufi individuals lived and provided political, religious, and spiritual leadership for populations that they encountered. For this reason, the Sufi organizations that emerged in this period are sometimes interpreted as the makers of Islamization and Turkification, i.e. the consciously responsible in this transformation.

Scholars such as Barkan suggested that there was a conscious and deliberate attempt by the Ottoman state to colonize, settle, convert the populations, and settle the lands of Anatolia and the Balkans. He uses the term colonizer-dervishes to describe this phenomenon.<sup>104</sup> Barkan uses the term monasteries and *couvent ermitage* for the dervish lodges. Similarly, he refers to the dervishes of the period as missionaries and knights.<sup>105</sup> He suggests that the colonization of Anatolia and the Balkans was a deliberate process of Turkish orders and brotherhoods to settle, colonize, and convert local populations and regions which was directed and supported by the Ottoman state. He has been criticized for not providing discussions of their religious identities and reasoning for their transitioning from semi-nomadic to sedentary life.<sup>106</sup> Barkan carefully contrasts the orders of these period with the orders of the modern period which he considers corrupt. He refers to the chronicle of Aşıkpaşazade, who refers to the *ahıyan*, *gaziyan*, *abdalan* and *bacıyan-i Rum*. Barkan considers these organizations to be similar to the freemasons and communist organizations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He continues the modern analogies with the argument that these dervish organizations resemble the pioneers or settlers of America.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Barkan, "Vakıflar ve Temlikler," 284.

<sup>105</sup> Barkan, "Vakıflar ve Temlikler," 282-4.

<sup>106</sup> Antov, *The Ottoman "Wild West,"* 46.

<sup>107</sup> Barkan, "Vakıflar ve Temlikler," 285.

The Yesevi order is usually interpreted in the historiography as the beginning of a Turkish Sufism that had begun in Central Asia and continued into Anatolia. Fuad Köprülü's work "Early Mystics in Turkish Literature" could be seen as the basis of the contemporary understanding of the Yesevi order that developed in the historiography of Turkish and Anatolian Sufism. Scholars such as Ocak and Melikoff continued this understanding. Melikoff considers Ahmed Yesevi as "a symbol which personifies the popular mysticism of Turkish speaking countries."<sup>108</sup> Similarly, she claims that Yesevi played a role in the nomadic Turks' conversion to Islam.<sup>109</sup> In the recent decades, Karamustafa has challenged the centrality of the role of the Yesevi order in Anatolian Sufism.<sup>110</sup> This approach could also be seen as an attempt to connect Central Asian Turkic history to Anatolian Turkish history. These attempts were influenced by nationalist interpretations of the Turkish past which served the purpose of formulating a new national consciousness in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for the new Turkish nation state.<sup>111</sup>

Hacı Bayram was a pioneering figure in Anatolian Sufism. The Bayrami tariqa is seen as the foundation of different Sufi traditions in Anatolia. Scholars have a limited amount of information about the figure of Bayram. According to tradition, Eşrefoğlu Rumi became a disciple of Hacı Bayram. Then, he married Hacı Bayram's daughter. Afterwards, Eşrefoğlu Rumi followed Hacı Bayram's order and went to Hama for his Sufi training. It is very plausible that stories like this could have been invented to create an Anatolian lineage for Eşrefoğlu Rumi

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<sup>108</sup> Melikoff, *Sur Les Traces*, 139.

<sup>109</sup> Melikoff, *Sur Les Traces*, 150.

<sup>110</sup> Ahmet T. Karamustafa, "Origins of Anatolian Sufism," in *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society: Sources, Doctrine, Rituals, Turuq, Architecture, Literature and Fine Arts, Modernism*, ed. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2005), 83.

<sup>111</sup> Karamustafa, "Origins," 70-71.

by connecting his *silsila* to the founding figure of Hacı Bayram, whose lineage is traced by Bayrami and Melami Sufi traditions.<sup>112</sup> Suraiya Faruqi claims that the Bektashi order have embraced the name of Hacı Bayram in their *tekkes* and different sources mentioned Bektashi and Bayrami *tekkes* interchangeably.<sup>113</sup>

The Sufi orders in Anatolia, just like in other places, developed into complex institutions. In this process, the emphasis of the orders changed from following charismatic shaykhs into a style of Sufi order based around sophisticated symbols and rituals. The locations of tombs of Sufi leaders and dervish lodges came to play a significant role as well. These locations came to hold great spiritual significance to their orders.

Among the important figures in early Ottoman Sufism are the Yazıcıoğlu brothers.<sup>114</sup> They lived in Gelibolu, a town located at the intersection of Anatolia and the Balkans. They were known to be disciples of Hacı Bayram.<sup>115</sup> The Yazıcıoğlu brothers were known for writing the work *Muhammediye*, a significant example of popular Sufi literature. The *Muhammediye* became extremely famous in the following centuries due to the information it provides about the basics of the Islamic faith. Apart from the basics of Islamic faith that it provides, it also includes sections on the apocalypse, heaven, and hell.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *L'Autre Visage de l'Islam dans L'Histoire Sociale de Turquie* (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 2013), 55-56.

<sup>113</sup> Suraiya Faruqi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşilik* (Istanbul: Simurg, 2003), 37, 49, 51.

<sup>114</sup> Carlos Grenier, "The Yazıcıoğlu Brothers and the Textual Genealogies of Ottoman Islam," *Turcica* 49 (2018), 37-59.; Tobias Heinzelmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur und Buchkultur im Osmanischen Reich Eine Studie zur Nutzung der Werke Brüder Yazıcıoğlu* (Würzburg: Orient-Institut Istanbul, 2015).

<sup>115</sup> Haşim Şahin, *Dervişler ve Sufi Çevreler Klasik Çağ Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvufi Şahsiyetler* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2017), 126.

<sup>116</sup> Amil Çelebioğlu, ed. *Muhammediye*, (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1996).

Different scholars have continued and reinterpreted the paradigm adopted by Barkan. Melikoff connects the Janissary corps with the colonizing dervishes paradigm of Barkan. She favors an approach which connects the Janissaries to the Bektashis. In this context, the Ottoman state utilized the Bektashi order to conduct a policy of Islamization of space, individuals, and bureaucracy with the help of the Bektashi order.<sup>117</sup>

Because of the strength of the Köprülü paradigm, Bektashism (as well as Alevism) came to be seen as the manifestation of the nomadic Turkish religion under the umbrella of a heterodox interpretation of Islam. Bektashism has been interpreted as “the quintessential syncretism” and it has even been perceived as “a way station between Christianity and Islam.”<sup>118</sup> Melikoff connects the religion practiced by the Babais, a precursor of the Bektashi tradition.<sup>119</sup> She considers the Bektashis as well as the Babais to be groups which continued the Turkic Shaman beliefs under the larger umbrella of Islamic religion. According to Melikoff, syncretism and preservation of older religious traditions became defining characteristics for the Alevi-Bektashi beliefs.<sup>120</sup>

Many scholars have perceived the Bektashis as an order which does not belong to their understanding of “orthodox” or “normative” Islam. Schimmel perceives the Bektashis as an “unsophisticated order.”<sup>121</sup> She describes the *abdalan-i Rum* as dervishes who wandered through

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<sup>117</sup> Melikoff, *Sur Les Traces*, 67.

<sup>118</sup> Peacock, de Nicola and Yıldız, “Introduction,” 10.

<sup>119</sup> Melikoff, *Sur Les Traces*, 153.

<sup>120</sup> Melikoff, *Sur Les Traces*, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 280-1.

the empire covered with animal skins and silver earrings.<sup>122</sup> Schimmel claims the traditional Khurasanian spiritual chain of Hacı Bektash would have required a more Sunni ideology. Similarly, she claims that Bektahshism “became a receptacle for all kinds of non-Sunnite currents.”<sup>123</sup> Nathalie Clayer argues that the Ottoman state used Bektashis in order to bring the heterodox currents in the empire in check. She points out that Safavid imperial challenge decreased the Ottoman trust in the Bektashis. As a result, it lead to the emergence of Halveti order as a significant force in the Ottoman Empire. Clayer suggests that, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Halvetis adopted the policies of Islamization of Anatolia and the Balkans, which had previously been performed by the Bektashi order.<sup>124</sup>

Hurufis and Hurufism have long been a fascinating mystical school of thought. Many scholars who have studied late medieval and early modern Islamic intellectual and religious history have been fascinated with this topic. This fascination is especially present in Ottoman history because of the influence of the Hurufis in this empire. Moreover, the influence of Hurufis in Sufi and intellectual groups have been seen as mechanisms to survive the persecution they faced.<sup>125</sup> Fatih Usluer argues that the Hurufis are not a separate Sufi order, that they do not have specific rituals and practices like Sufi orders do.<sup>126</sup> Instead, it is a philosophical and mystical movement that attaches significant importance to *wahdat al-wujud* doctrine and a

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<sup>122</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 335 .

<sup>123</sup> Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 339.

<sup>124</sup> Nathalie Clayer, *Mystiques, État & Société: Les Halvetis dans l'aire balkanique de la fin du XVe siècle à nos jours* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 369.

<sup>125</sup> For instance, the executions of influential Hurufi figures such as Fadhlallah and Nesimi by Timurid authorities.

<sup>126</sup> Fatih Usluer, *Hurufilik: İlk Elden Kaynaklarla Doğuşundan İtibaren* (Istanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2009), 171.



mystical interpretation of letters. Hurufis emerged with their founder Fadhlallah in Iran, but in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, their followers spread throughout the Ottoman Empire.<sup>127</sup>

The view endorsed by Barkan, that Sufi orders deliberately attempted to settle, Islamize, and Turkify the lands of Rum is no longer held by most of the researchers focusing on this period. The Islamization and Turkification processes are more likely to be interpreted as evolutionary processes that occurred over the centuries. The role of particular shaykhs, saintly figures, and brotherhoods in the processes of Islamization and Turkification is still awaiting detailed study by researchers. The question of what roles certain shaykhs and saintly figures played has yet to be proven by research.

## **1.5. Eşrefoğlu Rumi: A Life and Works**

### **1.5.1. Sources About Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Life**

Historical studies attest that a man who is known as Eşrefoğlu Abdullah Rumi, Abdullah-ı Rumi, or Eşrefzade Rumi lived in Ottoman Anatolia. Many studies describing the life of Eşrefoğlu Rumi follow a particular historical account written about his life. Abdullah ibn Veliyuddin is known to have written the account of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life in the work *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>128</sup> William Hickman suggests that the author Baldırzade, in his

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<sup>127</sup> Usluer, *Hurufilik*, 9.

<sup>128</sup> Bill Hickman, "Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries — An Historiographical Essay Part I: What Happened to Eşrefoğlu?," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 46, (2015): 3.

work on the saints of Bursa region, *Ravza-i Evliya*, adapted Abdullah ibn Veluyuddin's account of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life. Baldırzade's account was gradually adopted by more and more authors writing about Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life and it became the most prevalent account of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life.<sup>129</sup>

Hickman discusses two interpretations regarding the life of Eşrefoğlu Rumi using different sources. He points to Taşköprüzade's guide to Ottoman scholars (*Şakaik-i Numaniyye*) as well as the hagiographical account Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life (*Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*) as two sources that provide information about Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life. He suggests that many authors have adopted the hagiographical account and discarded completely Taşköprüzade's account. Hickman argues that Taşköprüzade's account should also be considered as a legitimate source of information regarding his life having in mind the fact that it is the oldest source regarding the life of Eşrefoğlu Rumi.<sup>130</sup>

Modern scholars such as Orhan Köprülü attempted to discredit the Taşköprüzade account in favor of the prevalent account written by Baldırzade.<sup>131</sup> Köprülü justifies choosing the prevalent account by arguing that the authors coming from the same community as Eşrefoğlu Rumi would have allowed the author to provide a more accurate account of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life.<sup>132</sup> In other words, since Baldırzade was from the Eşrefi community, modern scholars should believe this account and consider it as the more accurate one. Köprülü suggests that the accounts

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<sup>129</sup> Hickman, "Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries," 5.

<sup>130</sup> Hickman, "Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries," 4, 33.

<sup>131</sup> Hickman, "Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries," 8-9.

<sup>132</sup> Hickman, "Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries," 9.

provided by Taşköprüzade and Baldirzade could be talking about two different individuals who lived around the same time were both referred to as son of Eşref (Eşrefoğlu).<sup>133</sup> However, Hickman rejects this explanation. He argues that Köprülü's interpretation does not provide a credible explanation.<sup>134</sup>

### 1.5.2. The Narratives on Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Life

According to the prevalent account about his life, Eşrefoğlu Rumi lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Ottoman Anatolia. His father was Eşref, who was known to be from Egypt. Eşref came to Anatolia and settled in the town of İznik (Nicaea). İznik is located in the Bythinian region of northwestern Anatolia, where the Ottoman emirate initially ruled as a small principality. Eşrefoğlu Rumi was born in the town of İznik. The exact year of his birth is unknown. However, according to some accounts, he was born in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, specifically in the year 1377 or 1378.<sup>135</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi spent most of his life in İznik and died there in the year 1469.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is seen as “one of the major figures of 15<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Sufism: inspired teacher, author of manuals of mystical belief and practice, and poet of lasting renown.”<sup>136</sup> It was in this transitional environment of 15<sup>th</sup> century that Eşrefoğlu Rumi became a disciple of the famous Sufi figure, Hacı Bayram. Later, Eşrefoğlu Rumi went to Hama in Syria

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<sup>133</sup> Hickman, “Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries,” 9.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade* XIV.

<sup>136</sup> Hickman, “Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries,” 2.

to join the Qadiri Sufi order, which had been established by Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani.<sup>137</sup> On his way back to Anatolia, Eşrefoğlu Rumi founded a Sufi lodge in his hometown of İznik (Nicaea) in northwestern Anatolia. Eşrefoğlu Rumi was a member of the Qadiri order in Anatolia. This order (i.e., the Qadiri branch in Anatolia) would evolve into what would later be referred as the “Eşrefî” order or “the Eşrefî branch” of the Qadiri order.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is known to have become interested in the Sufi path.<sup>138</sup> For this reason, he began his long journey on the Sufi path in Bithynia. First, he became a disciple for the Sufi figure Emir Sultan in Bursa. It has also been suggested that he followed a person known as Abdal Mehmed for divine knowledge.<sup>139</sup> Later, he became a disciple for the famous Sufi figure of Hacı Bayram in Ankara. It has been claimed that he was married to the daughter of Hacı Bayram.<sup>140</sup> Later, he was sent by Hacı Bayram to Syria to follow a further Sufi training in the city of Hama.

Afterwards, Eşrefoğlu Rumi went to Syria to become a disciple of the Qadiri shaykh Husayn. This shaykh coming from the lineage of the eponymous founder of the Qadiri order shaykh Abdulqadir Gaylani. Afterwards, Eşrefoğlu Rumi began rigorous training in the Sufi path which included practices such as ritual isolation (*khalwat*). After his training in Hama, Eşrefoğlu Rumi returned to Anatolia and settled in his hometown of İznik. There, he founded a

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<sup>137</sup> The Qadiri Sufi order was established by the followers of Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani (d.1166) in Baghdad. They followed the Hanbali school of law. Qadiris were involved in ascetic practices such as isolation, remembrance and fasting.

<sup>138</sup> Mustafa Kara, *Eşrefoğlu Rumi* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2010), 36-37.

<sup>139</sup> Hickman, “Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries,” 3.

<sup>140</sup> Hickman, “Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries,” 3.

Sufi *dergah* (convent) and attempted to spread his ideas on Sufi piety, as well as spreading Sufi ideals of the Qadiri order to Anatolia. He died in İznik in 1469.

Here, one can ask the questions: Did Eşrefoğlu Rumi really become a disciple of Emir Sultan or Hacı Bayram? Or is it the case that the author of the *menakıb* wished to establish connections with these Sufi figures and Eşrefoğlu Rumi, thus incorporating other significant Sufi figures' legacy into Eşrefoğlu Rumi's own legacy? The *Menakıb* also expresses that some people claim that Eşrefoğlu Rumi intended to become a disciple for Akşemseddin before he became a disciple of Hacı Bayram.<sup>141</sup> Is it that the author trying to position Eşrefoğlu Rumi within the same group of early Ottoman Sufi figures by mentioning possible connections between them?

The prevalent account of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life, which is based on Muhyiddin and Baldirzade, is not the only account of his life. Ahmed Taşköprüzade's account differs from the standard prevalent account of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life. Taşköprüzade emphasizes Eşrefoğlu Rumi's career as a scholar teaching in a madrasa.<sup>142</sup> At the same time, Taşköprüzade acknowledges that he initiated himself on the Sufi path.<sup>143</sup> This account ends by suggesting that Eşrefoğlu Rumi wanted to travel after joining a group of Sufi dervishes. According to this account, the group of wandering dervishes he joined are Kalenders. This group later takes Eşrefoğlu Rumi with force, and they travelled together until he died.<sup>144</sup> This account ends

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<sup>141</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 5.

<sup>142</sup> Hickman, "Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries," 4.

<sup>143</sup> Hickman, "Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries," 5.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

abruptly and Taşköprüzade does not offer any reasoning for these events in any part of his work.<sup>145</sup>

The life story of Eşrefoğlu Rumi reflects the developments that were taking place in this period. His Sufi training and the articulation and propagation of his version of the Qadiri Sufi path is characteristic of his time. During this period, many scholars and Sufi figures sought knowledge and mystical enlightenment in the central Islamic lands. These figures contributed to the transmission of culture from the central Islamic lands to the lands of Rum and became influential in the creation of Ottoman Islamic institutions. Atçıl discusses how polities like the early Ottoman state benefited from the knowledge and expertise of scholars, while increasing their legitimacy through patronage of scholars.<sup>146</sup>

### 1.5.3. Historiography on Eşrefoğlu Rumi

As a Sufi mystic, scholar, and poet, Eşrefoğlu Rumi has been referenced by different scholars in different contexts. He is usually praised for his poetry in which he uses the vernacular Turkish language of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>147</sup> It is possible to spot the usage of vernacular in his poetry collection (*divan*). As a poet, Eşrefoğlu Rumi has usually been compared with Yunus Emre. Yunus Emre, like Eşrefoğlu Rumi, was a poet revered for the use of simple Turkish language in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in which he conveys certain mystical ideas. Yunus Emre is accepted

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<sup>145</sup> Hickman, “Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries,” 6.

<sup>146</sup> Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans*, 22-23.

<sup>147</sup> Mustafa Özdamar, *Eşrefoğlu Abdullah-ı Rumi* (Istanbul: Kırkkandil Yayınları, 2002), 7.; Ömür Ceylan, *Eşrefoğlu Rumi* (Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2007), 5.

as one of the first examples of the Anatolian Turkish language in a time, when few works had been written in this language.<sup>148</sup>

Recently, the works of Eşrefoğlu Rumi have been interpreted by his emphasis on the Alid lineage in the *Tarikatname*. Scholars are particularly fascinated by this interpretation because it took place before the Ottoman articulation of a decidedly Sunni religious ideology, which can be seen from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. From this perspective, Derin Terzioğlu considers the 15<sup>th</sup> century to be a transitional phase between the “metadoxy” of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the sectarianism of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition, she suggests that in the same period there was a rapprochement between Sufism and Shiism.<sup>149</sup>

#### 1.5.4. Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s Works

Eşrefoğlu Rumi has been known as a Sufi figure. However, according to Taşköprüzade, Eşrefoğlu Rumi was a scholar who taught at the madrasa in Nicaea.<sup>150</sup> He wrote two major works, as well as a poetry collection (*divan*). He authored the work *Müzekki an-Nüfus* (the Purifier of Souls) to popularize his Sufi ideas and educate common believers about the tenets of Islam. His work *Tarikatname* (The Book of the Sufi Path) has a more specific audience in mind.

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<sup>148</sup> Mustafa Kara, *Dervişin Hayatı Sufinin Kelamı* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2005), 439.; Fahir İz, “Eshrefoghlu ‘Abd Allah,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Vol. XII Supplement, ed. P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 282-283.

<sup>149</sup> Derin Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization” in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (New York: Routledge, 2012), 91.

<sup>150</sup> Hickman, “Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries,” 25.

It can be seen as an attempt to reach and provide guidance to the potential disciples who were interested in the path of Sufism.<sup>151</sup>

In his work *Tarikatname*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides stories with morals embedded in Sufi ideals to disseminate his opinions on the basics of Sufism. He presents to these potential disciples with his own ideals of Sufi piety and urges them to identify the “right” spiritual master. The book contains sections on the qualities of the right shaykh, his duties, the importance of following a shaykh, the characteristics of the *awliya* (saints) and *anbiya* (prophets), the hierarchical order of different Sufi positions. It also contains criticism and condemnation of some “*munafiq*”<sup>152</sup> groups. It gives an important position to the qualities of Ali ibn Abi Talib<sup>153</sup> and compares him with other caliphs. The book also contains some sections on several ascetic ideals, such as remembrance of God (*dhikr*), isolation (*khalwa*), ritual dancing (*sama*) and taming the soul (*nafs*).

In his work *Müzekki an-Nüfus* (the Purifier of Souls), Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides different stories to popularize his understanding of Sufi piety. As it is obvious from the title, Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a discussion of taming one’s soul. He considers the taming of the soul as the most central feature of abandoning everything worldly and embracing a pious and ascetic lifestyle. Despite a general disdain for the common people and a praise for the ascetic lifestyle,

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<sup>151</sup> Hickman, “Two 15<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman Sufi Mysteries,” 17-18.

<sup>152</sup> *Munafiq*: religious hypocrites. Camilla P. Adang, “Hypocrites and Hypocrisy” in *Encyclopaedia of the Quran*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 468-472.

<sup>153</sup> Ali ibn Abi Talib was the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad. He served as the fourth caliph. (r. 656-661)



this work has been very popular since the time of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. It has reached to a wide network of Turkish-speaking Muslims, who are willing to learn about Islamic faith and Sufism. This work includes sections on apocalypse, death, heaven, hell and many other eschatological and cosmological aspects of Islamic faith. Narratives about cosmology, piety, stories about saints, prophets, and Sufi figures contributed to the dissemination of these ideas in the Turkish speaking Muslim community of the Rum.

These works can be seen as instructive manuals that aim to guide the recently Islamized and Turkified Rumi Muslims and aim to teach them the basics of the Islamic faith, rituals, and Sufi ideas. As several scholars have pointed out, the early Ottoman authors produced literature comprising of hagiographies and *ilm-i hals* (catechetical works) to educate the Muslim population in Anatolia and Balkans, including recent converts, about the basics of the Islamic creed.<sup>154</sup>

## 1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to provide a general background on Ottoman social and political history. Afterwards, I attempted to discuss several main debates in the Ottoman historiography. These debates played a role in the understanding of early Ottoman period in which Eşrefoğlu Rumi lived. The Rumi identity, its transformation, the Turkification and

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<sup>154</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 27.; Derin Terzioğlu, “Where ‘*İlm-i Hāl*’ Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization,” *Past & Present* 220, no.1 (August, 2013): 82-83.

Islamization of the lands of Rum, and vernacularization of high Islamic culture in the lands of Rum were significant process that impacted the time of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. I attempted to discuss different approaches to these key debates. At the same time, I attempted to provide a discussion of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life and his works and the context in which he lived and wrote his works. I have discussed the main understandings of Islam as an area of scientific inquiry. I believe reinterpretation and reevaluation of these concepts are necessary for scholars in order to construct their own arguments.

## Chapter 2: Building A Piety<sup>155</sup>

### 2.1. The Introduction

*“Gör ol şeyhsiz gidenleri*

*Kimi mülhid kimi dehri*

*Olma sen cebri ya kaderi*

*Zinhar şeyhe eriş şeyhe*

*Hakk habibi iken resul*

*Şeyhsiz Hakk’a varmadı yol*

*Kim şeyhi yok şeytandır ol*

*Zinhar şeyhe eriş şeyhe”<sup>156</sup>*

See those who walk without a *shaykh*

Some are heretics, some materialists

Be neither a Jabrite nor a Qadarite<sup>157</sup>

So reach a *shaykh*, a *shaykh*

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<sup>155</sup> This chapter is a redeveloped version of my chapter: “Orthodoxy, sectarianism and ideals of Sufism in an early Ottoman context: Eşrefoğlu Rumi and his book of the Sufi path” in *Cultural Fusion of Sufi Islam: Alternative Paths to Mystical Faith*, ed. Sarwar Alam (New York: Routledge, 2020), 130-146.

<sup>156</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Eşrefoğlu Divanı*, (Istanbul: Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, 1972?), 91.

<sup>157</sup> Jabrites (Jabariyah) and Qadarites (Qadariyah) were two opposing theological currents that emerged in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The former supported the idea of predestination and the latter supported the idea of “free will.” Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Chicago: Aldine Atherton Inc, 1973), 117.

When the Messenger was a lover of God  
The road did not reach God without a *shaykh*  
One who is without a *shaykh* has the devil as *shaykh*  
So reach a *shaykh*, a *shaykh*<sup>158</sup>

In the two quatrains above, Eşrefoğlu Rumi advises his audience to find a *shaykh*.<sup>159</sup> This call reflects his emphasis on the role of a *shaykh* in his understanding of Sufi Islamic piety. With the advice that every believer should follow a *shaykh*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi lays out the foundation of his understanding of piety. In the same quatrain, he also makes the argument that those without a *shaykh* are heretics or materialists. Therefore, with this quatrain, Eşrefoğlu Rumi not only points out his vision of ideal piety, but also addresses the question of how those who fall outside of this vision are to be labelled. In this instance, they are not only excluded from the higher levels of piety but also placed outside the boundaries of his understanding of Islamic “orthodoxy,” that is, what he understood to be “true Islam” and “correct” doctrine and practice. What does this 15<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Sufi figure’s vision of a *shaykh*-centered piety as the foundational ideal of his Sufi vision tell modern scholars about the peculiarities of late medieval and early modern Islamic religiosities? How does this vision relate to a particular notion of Islamic Sufi piety as associated with “correct doctrine” as well as a spiritual ideal?

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<sup>158</sup> Translation is mine.

<sup>159</sup> *Shaykh* translates to elder. In this Sufi context, *shaykh* is the spiritual guide that helps the Sufi initiates in their spiritual journey.

Different scholars have used terms like *confessional ambiguity*, *metadoxy*, *doctrinal fluidity*, and *religiously promiscuous ambiance* in reference to Islam in the post-Mongol and early Ottoman era.<sup>160</sup> The way modern scholars evaluate this period has not been independent of their understanding of what Islam is.<sup>161</sup> Much of our current understanding of early modern, as well as modern Islam in the Ottoman Empire can be traced to the developments of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, particularly to the Ottoman-Safavid wars and to the reconfiguration of sectarian divisions that followed the initial Ottoman-Safavid conflict. These developments led to the transformation of the late medieval understanding of Islam during the early modern period. For this reason, understanding post-Mongol and late medieval Islam requires a reevaluation of the mentalities and ideas of the period as well as being aware of the modern lenses through which the current historiography reflects on this period.

From the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire came to see and present itself as an upholder and defender of Sunni Islam, increasingly using Sunni rhetoric to legitimize its existence and policies. This endorsement of Sunni Islam can be seen as a reaction to the emergence of the Safavid Empire of Iran as a major Shi'ite power. The founder of the Safavid Empire, Shah Ismail I (r. 1501-1524), proclaimed Twelver Shi'ism the religion of the state, thus giving preference to “high,” “scriptural” Shi'ism over “ghulat”<sup>162</sup> Shi'ism which was favored by

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<sup>160</sup> John Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1999), 4.; Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 76.; Derin Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization,” 91.; Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God & the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 106.

<sup>161</sup> Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 6.

<sup>162</sup> *Ghulat* is translated as “extremists,” this term is used for some Shiite doctrines that has seen as “heretical” by many Muslim groups.

Ismail's semi-nomadic Turcoman Qizilbash supporters, who, indeed, played a central role in bringing the Safavid state into existence, but were seen as "heretics" by both Sunni and Shi'ite ulema on account of ghulat Shi'ism's embracement of some concepts that ran counter to shari'a, such as reincarnation (*hulul*) and transmigration of souls (*tanasukh*).<sup>163</sup> The first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century thus witnessed the rise of the two major Islamic powers, which were also engaged in an intense struggle along sectarian lines. It was this struggle between the Sunni Ottomans and Shi'i Safavids in (the first half of) the 16<sup>th</sup> century that very much shaped the lasting confessional boundaries between Sunnism and Shi'ism in the centuries that followed. Scholars' understanding of Islam, and especially of the confessional divisions between Sunnism and Shi'ism is not independent of these 16<sup>th</sup> century developments and the related confessional reconfiguration.

This chapter will explore Eşrefoğlu Rumi in the historical and religious context of the early Ottoman polity, that is before the Ottoman-Safavid conflict in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the related reconfiguration of sectarian boundaries. It will first examine two particular concepts, orthodoxy and sectarianism, with an emphasis on how they relate to Eşrefoğlu Rumi's vision of Islam. I will then discuss Eşrefoğlu Rumi's ideals of Sufism, which are characteristic of the emergence of a particular version of early Ottoman piety. Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Sufi ideals include the centrality of the *shaykh*, asceticism, an emphasis on a spiritual hierarchy of *shaykhs*, disciples, as well as common believers, and different Sufi rituals and pious behavior. The

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<sup>163</sup> Hans Roemer, "The Qizilbash Turcomans: Founders and Victims of the Safavid Theocracy," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990).; Kathryn Babayan, "The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1/4 (1994): 135-161.

analysis of these concepts in Eşrefoğlu Rumi's works, and his ideals of Sufism, can offer fresh perspectives to scholars focusing on this particular era. His understanding and expression of a specific kind of piety may help attain a better understanding of the evolution of the notion of "orthodoxy" during this period.

## **2.2. The Shaping of Ottoman "Orthodoxy": Historical and Conceptual Perspectives**

In this section I will discuss several ways in which orthodoxy has been defined and analyzed in Islam. Then, I will provide my own suggestion to answer this question. Finally, I will analyze the role of different groups in the making of "orthodoxy."

### **2.2.1. Defining Orthodoxy**

The absence of an official, and centralized clergy in Islam complicates the question of defining orthodoxy.<sup>164</sup> For instance, Watt argues that the absence of a decision-making body similar to that of the Christian Church<sup>165</sup> means that terms such as "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" are not applicable in the case of Islam.<sup>166</sup> If this is the case, how and why is the usage of

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<sup>164</sup> Brett Wilson, "The Failure of Nomenclature: The concept of 'orthodoxy' in the Study of Islam," in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Islam: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies vol.I*, ed. Maribel Fierro (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 158.

<sup>165</sup> Even though an official Church structure did not exist in the Islamic tradition, different groups and individuals expressed their opinion on the definitions of "correct Islam" and "heresy." In addition, there is a well-developed heresiographical tradition in Islam.

<sup>166</sup> Wilson, "The Failure of Nomenclature," 158.

“orthodoxy” still so prevalent in modern Islamic studies? Could scholars of Islam decide on a definition of orthodoxy?

This brings us to the issue of how Islamic orthodoxy can be defined. Some scholars have claimed that the use of the term orthodoxy is not suitable when discussing Islam as Islam is a religion of “orthopraxy.” According to this view, orthopraxy, or how people behave as Muslims, holds greater significance than what the followers believe.<sup>167</sup> Brett Wilson suggests that the usage of the term orthodoxy in Islamic studies has brought more confusion than clarity.<sup>168</sup>

Norman Calder cites scripture, community, gnosis, reason, and charisma as categories that capture religious belief.<sup>169</sup> He argues that Sunni Islam is more strongly influenced by the notion of community than any of his other categories. Madrasa-style Islam is usually seen as the purveyor of Islamic high culture and is associated with Islamic orthodoxy. However, in Sufi and Shiite traditions, other categories such as gnosis and charisma came to be key factors in the making of Islamic orthodoxies.

Talal Asad defines Islam above all as a tradition. His definition of tradition emphasizes the correct form and purpose of a given practice. In his assessment, the statement that Islam is a religion of orthopraxy, and not orthodoxy, undermines the importance of what can be defined as “correct belief” in Islam. Asad criticizes scholars who deemphasize the importance of

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<sup>167</sup> Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 148.

<sup>168</sup> Wilson, “The Failure of Nomenclature,” 154-155.

<sup>169</sup> Norman Calder, “The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy,” in *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, ed. F. Daftary (London: IB Tauris 2000), 71.



orthodoxy or define it as mere doctrine. Instead, Asad defines orthodoxy as “a distinctive relationship — a relationship of power to truth.”<sup>170</sup> Asad clarifies that orthodoxy is not a “mere body of opinion” but is based on the power of Muslims to regulate practices.<sup>171</sup> Asad accepts the idea that the definition of a tradition will be contested by the power structures that surround it.<sup>172</sup>

Scholars have generously utilized concepts such orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy in their studies of early Ottoman Islam. Alexander Knysh argues that students of Islam and social anthropologists have adopted an ahistorical notion of a timeless orthodoxy.<sup>173</sup> Some scholars have doubted the necessity of the usage of these concepts in the study of Islam. Knysh suggests that scholars usually fall into one of two groups: those who define a group as orthodox for the purpose of their study, or those who are critical of the use of the term orthodox in the context of Islam.<sup>174</sup>

“Heterodox” interpretation of Islam can be understood in contrast to Wilson’s conceptualization of orthodoxy. How can “heterodox” Islam be defined on its own terms? According to Ocak, syncretism is one of the most important characteristics of “heterodoxy.” Ocak argues that syncretism originates from the fusion of Islam with older religious traditions. Ocak associates “heterodox” traditions with the oral and nomadic cultures of the Turks and the

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<sup>170</sup> Talal Asad, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,” *Qui Parle* 17, no.2 (2009): 22.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Asad, “The Idea,” 22-24.

<sup>173</sup> Alexander Knysh, “Orthodoxy and Heresy in Medieval Islam: An Essay in Reassessment,” *The Muslim World* 83, no.1 (January, 1993): 237.

<sup>174</sup> Knysh, “Orthodoxy,” 225.

cultural-geographical spaces of Anatolia, the Balkans, and Central Asia.<sup>175</sup> Many scholars have discussed syncretism, just like the example of “heterodoxy,” as an “alternative understanding” of Islamic orthodoxy.<sup>176</sup>

Recently, some scholars have proposed a way around the problematic dichotomization of Islamic doctrine and practice as “heterodox” and orthodox.”<sup>177</sup> These scholars seem to prefer utilizing of terms such as “shari’a-minded” or “shari’a-abiding” (Islam) instead of “orthodox” or “heterodox.”<sup>178</sup> This dichotomization could make it easier for scholars to distinguish among different approaches to Islamic doctrine and practice. However, one should also consider the non-static, evolutionary nature of shari’a. The interpretation of Islamic law has changed depending on the subject and time, which challenges the assumption of a timeless and unchanging Islamic law. The usage of phrases such as “sharia-minded” can be problematic as there could be not only evolving, but also conflicting opinions on what constituted part of Sharia.

The main presumption in the discussion about Islamic orthodoxy is scholars’ belief in the existence of a particular version of Islam that is “correct” and/or “mainstream.” According to this approach, the interpretations and practices of Islamic religion that do not follow this specific

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<sup>175</sup> Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Perspectives and Reflections on Religious and Cultural Life in Medieval Anatolia* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2012), 28.

<sup>176</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 17.

<sup>177</sup> Robert Langer and Udo Simon, “The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy,” *Die Welt des Islams* 48, (2008): 273-274.

<sup>178</sup> Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol.1, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 351.; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2007), 73.; Antov, *The Ottoman “Wild West,”* 51.

“correct” approach have usually been labeled as “heretical” versions of Islam. Scholars connected the abundance of concepts such as orthodoxy in Islamic studies to the imposition of Western religious categories on the study of Islam. Brett Wilson suggests that, although the term orthodoxy originally meant “correct doctrine,” it is currently used in the English language to mean religious beliefs and practices that are conventional, prevalent, normal, conservative, hardcore, or overzealous.<sup>179</sup> This usage demonstrates how the original meaning of orthodoxy shifted with time from “correct doctrine” to the “mainstream belief.” Perhaps this shift could be interpreted as evidence of the prejudices of some scholars generally working on religion and more specifically on Islam.

### **2.2.2. How to Use the Term “Orthodoxy”: A Suggestion**

The relativity of concepts such as orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy does not necessarily mean their usage should be avoided. Clearly, believers will tend to consider themselves and their interpretations to be “orthodox” rather than “heterodox” or “heretical.” The concepts of orthodoxy and heterodoxy can be useful if the author using these terms clearly defines his or her use of the terms in the context of a work. When used without a clear definition, these terms put the author at risk of making theological assumptions. Thus, scholars should not attempt to impose their own judgements about whether Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s ideas are orthodox or not. Instead, they should strive to analyze how Eşrefoğlu Rumi has constructed his understanding of

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<sup>179</sup> Wilson, “The Failure of Nomenclature,” 155.; Knysh, “Orthodoxy,” 155.

“orthodoxy,” either by attempting to understand his own version of “correct” doctrine or by defining those groups or beliefs that he considers heretical.

In addition, orthodoxy can be better understood by acknowledging the usage of multiple and competing “orthodoxies.” The state, religious scholars, leaders of various religious and mystical orders have a larger role to play and can make their case in the debates about defining Islam and formulating a “correct doctrine” as a part of Islamic tradition. According to this perspective, Eşrefoğlu Rumi, because of his role as a significant Sufi figure, can be seen as a “maker of an orthodoxy.”

### **2.2.3. “Makers” of Orthodoxy**

The Ottoman imperial state (i.e., from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century onwards) can definitely be seen as a maker of orthodoxy. The empire subjugated Islam to the state and allowed the presence of different religious groups in the palace.<sup>180</sup> For ordinary believers, state and religion came to be perceived as two sides of the same coin.<sup>181</sup>

Nikolay Antov suggests that the process of Ottoman “articulation of a religious orthodoxy” was a part of the Ottoman state’s transformation into a centralized, bureaucratic empire, and thus began even before the emergence of the Safavid Empire as a challenger to the

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<sup>180</sup> Karen Barkey, “Islam and Toleration: Studying the Ottoman Imperial Model,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 19, no.1/2 (December, 2005): 15.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

Ottoman religious ideology in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the Safavid challenge did increase the Ottoman need to articulate an imperial religious ideology.<sup>182</sup> As seen in the case of the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry, political concerns can be influential in the formulation and understanding of orthodoxy.

State-endorsed Ottoman imperial Islam should not be seen as a uniform religio-cultural phenomenon, but rather, as a network of different interrelated Islamic religiosities. The Ottoman state's multidimensional stance on Islam may be seen as tolerating the coexistence of diverse and competing Ottoman Islamic "orthodoxies" rather than one particular "Ottoman orthodoxy" dominating other forms of Islamic religiosity.<sup>183</sup> Thus, one could claim that, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman state had become an important actor in the conceptualization of orthodoxy.<sup>184</sup>

In the case of Ottoman Islam in particular, the Ottomans created the post of the chief mufti (*sheikh ül-Islam*), and sponsored madrasas and other similar institutions.<sup>185</sup> These actions could be seen as the Ottomans attempting to formulate or shape their own orthodoxy. Similarly, it touches upon the question to what extent groups like the ulama can play a role in the making of orthodoxy. Islamic institutions<sup>186</sup> have played a role in the development of an orthodoxy, in the sense of an orthodoxy defined by a centralized authority. The official support that the ulema

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<sup>182</sup> Nikolay Antov, *The Ottoman Wild West*, 277.

<sup>183</sup> Karen Barkey, "Islam and Toleration," 15.

<sup>184</sup> Kynsh, "Orthodoxy," 238.

<sup>185</sup> Richard Repp, *The Mufti of Istanbul: A Study in the Development of Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986).

<sup>186</sup> By Islamic institutions, I mean mosques, madrasas, *dervish* lodges. Places where Islamic sciences ('ilm), learning, and rituals were transmitted or practiced.

establishment enjoyed in the Ottoman Empire could, theoretically, bring them close to being “makers of an orthodoxy.” But did the ulema have the monopoly on the formulation of an Islamic orthodoxy or could Sufi orders, or other individuals and institutions, play a role in the making of orthodoxy?<sup>187</sup> One could argue that scholars and Sufi figures, such as Eşrefoğlu Rumi, played a significant role in the making of “Islamic orthodoxy.”

### 2.3. Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s Construction of Orthodoxy

I will claim that Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s *Tarikatname* can be seen as a Sufi’s attempt to construct his own version of an Ottoman Sunni-Sufi “orthodoxy.” The “orthodoxy” that Eşrefoğlu Rumi strove to construct is connected with his particular Sunni-oriented Sufism in which the spiritual guidance of the *shaykh* plays a seminal role and includes mystical rituals and practices. His version of Sufi Islam does not reject shari‘a-minded piety and includes non-mystical approaches to Islam. This distinguishes him from some other mystical traditions, for example the antinomian Sufi movements prominent in the 15<sup>th</sup> century lands of Rum.<sup>188</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s understanding of “true religion” and piety can be defined by evaluating his conception of what falls outside of the boundaries of his own understanding of proper Islam, i.e. his orthodoxy. He criticizes groups that fall outside of his ideals of Islamic piety and “true

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<sup>187</sup> The ulema and the Sufi orders did not necessarily exclude each other. Many members of the ulema did practice Sufism. Many Islamic scholars, such as Al-Ghazali, gradually started to find Sufism acceptable. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders*, 9.

<sup>188</sup> On these antinomian Sufi movements, see Ahmet Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Middle Period 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994).; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Marjinal Sufilik: Kalenderiler XIV-XVII Yüzyıllar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992).

doctrine.”<sup>189</sup> An analysis of what he considers improper Islam and how it contrasted with his “ideal piety” will provide an understanding of his own views on the ideals of Islamic piety and orthodoxy.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi criticizes people who follow the basic tenets of religion solely for receiving benefits from God but do not hold the Sufi ideal of reaching God for the sake of reaching God in and of itself. He considers the people who do pious deeds for worldly reasons to be people without religion and people of “wrong” belief.<sup>190</sup> He claims that their actions cannot truly be counted as pious deeds.<sup>191</sup> This fact demonstrates the importance that Eşrefoğlu Rumi places on intention in piety. His emphasis on the Sufi idea that seeking God is its own reward demonstrates the centrality and importance of Sufi piety in the making of his own “orthodoxy.”

Eşrefoğlu Rumi criticizes certain groups without specifying who they are, and labels them *münafiks* (hypocrites).<sup>192</sup> He claims that these people deserve to be sent to the lower layers of hell.<sup>193</sup> He suggests that they read books such as *Arşname* and *Gencname*, which are the works of Fadhlallah Astarabadi, the founder of the Hurufi movement.<sup>194</sup> He is referring to him without saying his name.<sup>195</sup> These claims strongly suggest that these groups could be Hurufis or

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<sup>189</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, ed. Esra Kesinkılıç (İstanbul: Gelenek Yayıncılık, 2002), 21.

<sup>190</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 16.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 21.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. “Yani ‘Be-dürüsti münafıklar makamı cehennemdür esfel-i safilindür ya’ni cehennemün en aşağı tabakasıdır.”

<sup>194</sup> Hurufis (Hurufiyya) is a gnostic sect founded by Fadlallah al-Astarabadi in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>195</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 21. “Ol ilmin aslı bir kişiden izhar olmuştur; lakin adın söylemezüz. Amma ol şahs dersin tamam itmiş dahı kendüden şeyhsuz halvet itmiş, keşf-i megayib olmuştur şeytandan.”

groups who hold certain Hurufi beliefs. Modern studies demonstrate that Hurufi beliefs included the centrality of human being in the Hurufi theology.<sup>196</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that these groups do not believe in the Quran and the hadith and that they treat the Quran as the *divan* (poetry collection) of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>197</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi makes the seemingly contradictory claims that these presumably Hurufi groups do not believe in the existence of God, and at the same time, believe that God is the one who encompasses everything.<sup>198</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi's critique seems to come from the fact that the Hurufi conceptualization of God differs from his own. He appears to be critical of some pantheistic strains of Hurufism that blur the distinction between God and his subjects. Eşrefoğlu Rumi further develops his criticism, claiming that members of these groups call each other God, implying that they attribute divinity to men.<sup>199</sup> He makes clear that prostrating themselves before one another rather than before God is not acceptable.<sup>200</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi is critical of these ideas probably because he believes that it will lead to belief in the divinity of man, which would be considered heresy by most interpretations of Islam. He insists that prostration should be performed for God only.<sup>201</sup> He also suggests that their '*ilm*'<sup>202</sup> is satanic in origin.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astrabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2005), 46.

<sup>197</sup> i.e., they saw Muhammad as the creator/author of the Quran

<sup>198</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 21.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid. "Birbirine 'Hu' dirlir; yani huva'l-lah adıdur. Ya'ni 'Sen olsun' dirlir; yani 'Allah'sın' dirlir."

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 21.

<sup>202</sup> *Ilm*: Learning, knowledge. *Marifa* is also translated as knowledge. However, *marifa* is seen as the intuitive knowledge that is associated with the Sufi path, as opposed to knowledge derived from Islamic sciences (*ilm*).

<sup>203</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 21.



Eşrefoğlu Rumi mentions some Sufi groups who claim that their prayers have already been performed and have thus abandoned the practice of prayers (*namaz*).<sup>204</sup> He claims that, due to their abandonment of prayer, these people have become *münafik* (Ar. munafiq) and *kafir*.<sup>205</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi states that if one skips a prayer, one becomes a sinner, however those who deny the practice of *namaz* become *münafik*, hence worse than infidels. Thus it is legitimate Islamic practice to kill them. He cites the Hadith which claims that the abandonment of *namaz* will lead to unbelief (*kufr*).<sup>206</sup> He gives the example of Muhammad and Ali who, according to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, never abandoned the ritual prayer (*salat*).<sup>207</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi also provides a discussion of some debates in Islamic theology (*kalam*).<sup>208</sup> He provides his views on the theological debate of whether the Quran is eternal or created.<sup>209</sup> According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, the Quran was created and eternal at the same time.<sup>210</sup> He argues the Quran is created only in the sense that it was written down and compiled by people. However, the text of the Quran was revealed by God, and is thus co-eternal with God, and not created. Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that the groups who suggest that the Quran is only created and not revealed (was not co-eternal with God), are to be considered infidels. His

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<sup>204</sup> Namaz: (ar. salat) Persian and Turkish for ritualized daily prayers in Islam. It is considered among the main five rituals most Muslims believe that they should follow.

<sup>205</sup> Kafir (kufr): From being “ungrateful” (to God), Infidel. Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 44.

<sup>206</sup> Namaz in Turkish. Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 44.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 15.

<sup>209</sup> This debate goes back to the period of Abbasid caliph Al-Mamun who started the doctrine of *mihna*. *Mihna* provided the caliph with a mechanism to compel the ulama conform to the Mutazilite theological doctrine. This doctrine included the argument of the createdness of the Koran. Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 126.

<sup>210</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 15.

arguments on the nature of Quran represent another point at which he draws a boundary of who can claim to be a Muslim and what falls outside of the Islamic religion.<sup>211</sup> With these pronouncements, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is acting as a Sufi authority, setting the boundaries of his own understanding of Islamic orthodoxy by taking stances on subjects such as the nature of the Quran.

## **2.4. Sectarianism**

### **2.4.1. Sectarian Atmosphere in Early Ottoman History**

What kind of sectarian atmosphere did Rumi Islam experience before the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry? What was the sectarian atmosphere in the 15<sup>th</sup> century? Scholars working on this period have been fascinated by the lack of strict compartmentalization of confessional identities in contrast to confessional identities of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This is because modern confessional markers were redrawn with the emergence of the Safavid Empire in Iran and subsequent Shiitization and Sunnitization policies that these empires pursued. Recently, scholars began to discuss “confessionalization” process within the territories of these two empires.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 15.

<sup>212</sup> Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 13.; Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 208.; Antov, *The Ottoman “Wild West,”* 276.

The term “confessional ambiguity” is used to denote an understanding of Islam in which the markers of sectarianism had not reached a certain level of maturity.<sup>213</sup> There is no dispute about the early Ottoman adherence of Sunni Islam, similar to the pre-Ottoman Sunni adherence of the Seljuqs of Rum. At the same time, Shiite themes and features existed within the boundaries of Rumi Islam.<sup>214</sup> One aspect that makes researchers’ analysis more complicated is the definition and understanding of Shiite doctrine and tendencies. The post-15<sup>th</sup> century atmosphere would be an era in which the boundaries of the Sunni and Shiite interpretations of Islam would be redrawn in such a way as to connect the confessional markers with the political entities that sponsored them.

As already mentioned, a major reconfiguration of sectarian boundaries in the Islamic world occurred in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of the Twelver Shi’ite Safavid Empire of Iran and the conflict between the latter and the Ottoman Empire, which would, in turn, increasingly style itself as a defender of “Sunni orthodoxy.” Prior to this major 16<sup>th</sup> century conflict, Ottoman Islam placed less emphasis on sectarian differences.<sup>215</sup> The emergence of the Safavid Empire has been considered a watershed in the process of increasing sectarianism in the Islamic world. The Ottomans would adopt a more decidedly Sunni religious ideology as a counter to the increasingly Shiite Safavid Empire.

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<sup>213</sup> John Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 4.

<sup>214</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 60.

<sup>215</sup> Terzioğlu, “How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnitization,” 303-304.

Ocak suggests a narrowing in the interpretation of Sunni Islam. According to Ocak, this shift was a response to the political crisis of the Ottoman Empire that emerged as a result of Ottoman-Safavid rivalry.<sup>216</sup> For this reason, the pre-16<sup>th</sup> century framework of sectarian boundaries was very different from the later, more institutionalized framework. Cemal Kafadar interprets this early period of Anatolian Islam as a period in which the distinctions between orthodox and heterodox aspects of Ottoman Islam had yet to develop. For this reason, Kafadar also employs the term “metadoxy” for this early period of Ottoman Islam.<sup>217</sup> According to Kafadar, metadoxy is: “*a state of being beyond doxies, a combination of being doxy-naive and being doxy-minded, as well as the absence of a state that was interested in rigorously defining and strictly enforcing an orthodoxy.*”<sup>218</sup>

Kafadar applies this understanding of metadoxy to sectarianism as well. In the same section, he states: “In this context, even if one were able to identify some particular item of faith as heterodox, this would not necessarily imply ‘Shi’i’ as it is usually assumed; questions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, even if they are meaningful, should not be formulated along the lines of Sunni/Shi’i sectarianism.”<sup>219</sup> Thus, the early Ottoman era features different expressions of Muslim piety which puts less emphasis on sectarian differences between the mainline Islamic sects of Sunnism and Shi’ism.

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<sup>216</sup> Ocak, *Perspectives and Reflections*, 26-27.

<sup>217</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 76.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

#### 2.4.2. Eşrefoğlu Rumi and Sectarianism

In several different instances in *Tarikatname*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi places an emphasis on the value of the lineage of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. Eşrefoğlu Rumi argues that real Muslims would value the house of the Prophet. He criticizes the Kharijites and considers them “worse than infidels” because of their distaste for the lineage of Ali.<sup>220</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses the murder of Ali’s children Hassan and Husayn, cursing their murderers. He concludes by indicating that no further discussion on the issue of this murder is required.<sup>221</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is self-consciously Sunni. His affiliation is made clear when he claims that the Sunni sect is the right one, using the term *mezheb-i evla*<sup>222</sup> to describe the Sunni sect.<sup>223</sup> He compares sectarian differences regarding certain rituals in Islamic religious practice.<sup>224</sup> From here, we get a further sense of his sectarian preference towards the Sunni sect. While Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses the term *mezheb*<sup>225</sup> to refer to the Sunnis as a “sect” in Islam, he utilizes the same term in the traditional sense (as a school of jurisprudence or legal thought) when discussing the four Sunni schools of legal thought, but claims that the ideal *dervish*<sup>226</sup> should hold the four Sunni *madhhab* as one.<sup>227</sup> He also suggests that the *dervish* should follow the madhhab that is

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<sup>220</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 15.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> The favored path

<sup>223</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 13.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> (Ar. *madhhab*, Tr. *mezheb*)

<sup>226</sup> Sufi disciples.

<sup>227</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 15.

the most compatible with the Sufi ideal of *takwa*<sup>228</sup>, whatever that *madhhab* might be. Unlike his endorsement of the Sunni sect, he does not explicitly name his *madhhab* preference.<sup>229</sup>

### 2.4.3. Ali in Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Piety

Eşrefoğlu Rumi attributes a very seminal and central position in his Sufi theology to Ali ibn Abi Talib. Although this seminal position might be surprising in light of a post-medieval Sunni Islamic point of view, it is not unusual for some Sufi groups including Eşrefoğlu Rumi's order to pay great respect to Ali ibn Abi Talib. In various instances in the *Tarikatname*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi constructs an image of Ali ibn Abi Talib that is fundamental to his understanding of Sufism and Islam.<sup>230</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi's conceptualizes Ali ibn Abi Talib as incapable of sin (*masum*), in contrast to the first three caliphs who were sinners.<sup>231</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that, while the first three caliphs were sinners, they sinned only in the Age of Ignorance<sup>232</sup>, before the revelations of the Prophet. He claims that they drank wine and adored idols before they became Muslims.<sup>233</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi's criticism of three caliphs is therefore limited. He praises all four (Rightly-guided) caliphs<sup>234</sup> and claims that they are saints.<sup>235</sup> He suggests that the four caliphs

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<sup>228</sup> Piety, fear of God

<sup>229</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 13.

<sup>230</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 4-6; 8-15.

<sup>231</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 45.

<sup>232</sup> Jahiliyya, the time before the emergence of Islam.

<sup>233</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 45.

<sup>234</sup> Rashidun.

<sup>235</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 8. "Bunlar a'la ve güzide velilerdür."

are the most respectable of the Prophets' Companions and those who do not like the four caliphs are the worst people.<sup>236</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, also suggests that it is acceptable if people do love one of the caliphs more than the other ones.<sup>237</sup> However, he criticizes people who like one of the (Rightly-guided) caliphs, and swear off the other three.<sup>238</sup>

Nevertheless, the account of the first three caliphs contrasts with the account of Ali. Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that Ali, even in the *jahiliyya*,<sup>239</sup> never sinned, drank wine, lied, committed adultery, or committed any other sin.<sup>240</sup> His praise of Ali is visibly stronger compared to that which he accords the first three caliphs. It is self-evident from the text that Eşrefoğlu Rumi is attempting to conceptualize an image of Ali that is essentially good, pure, and superior to ordinary human beings.

He praises Ali as the most virtuous (*efdal*) and saintly (*evliya*), emphasizes his relation to Muhammad, and describes him as “the lion of God.”<sup>241</sup> He perceives Ali as the perfect Sufi (*wali*)<sup>242</sup> whose examples should ideally be emulated by all Sufis. He cites the Hadith that allegedly includes the Prophet's words: “I am the city of ‘ilm and Ali is its gate”<sup>243</sup> to emphasize the prominent spiritual position of Ali ibn Abi Talib in his Sufi theology.<sup>244</sup> The most central part

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<sup>236</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 12. “Bunları sevmeyen ahbas-i taifedür.”

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Age of Ignorance, time period before the emergence of Islam.

<sup>240</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 45.

<sup>241</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 8.

<sup>242</sup> Usually translated as “saint” or “friend of God,” refers to the prominent Sufi figures.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. “İlmün şehriyem, Ali kapusıdır.”

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Sufi theology is the central position of the spiritual Sufi leader (the *shaykh*). According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, one key marker of the right *shaykh* is his pedigree which should be traced back to Ali.<sup>245</sup> He suggests that Muhammad and Ali are the people who can possess an eternal spirit.<sup>246</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a story about Ali's death.<sup>247</sup> In this story, when Ali was living in the city of Kufa, Muawiya<sup>248</sup> attempts to kill Ali by hiring a person called Abdullah ibn Mülcem (Ar. Ibn Muljam). Ibn Mülcem finds Ali but does not want to kill him. Afterwards, he falls in love with a Kharijite girl who states that she will be with him only if he kills Ali. Because of his love for the Kharijite girl, Ibn Mülcem decides to kill Ali. Ibn Mülcem finds Ali in a mosque and attacks him while he was praying. However, Ali continues with his prayer. Afterwards, Hasan, Huseyn, and Muhammad Hanefi (Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya) all enter the mosque.<sup>249</sup> When Ali understands that he is going to die he delivers his will to his children. According to the will, after his funeral prayer his body should be put in a coffin and should be delivered to a person whose face is hidden, who will come and guide his funeral prayer. After Ali dies his children obey his wish. When the person with a hidden face comes, he finishes the

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<sup>245</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 3.

Alid lineage is revered and accepted as the most important characteristic in many Shi'ite ideals of political leadership. Alid lineage is also revered by some Sufi orders, Shiite and Sunni alike. Alid lineage through Ali ibn Abi Talib's son Husayn called Sayyid and is particularly revered. Another Alid lineage is through Ali's other son Hasan called Sharif is revered as well.

<sup>246</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 9.

<sup>247</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 10-11.

<sup>248</sup> Muawiya, was from the Umayyad clan of the Quraysh tribe in Mecca and lived in the early days of Islamic history. He engaged in a civil war with Ali to be the next caliph, and eventually became the caliph after Ali was murdered in 661 CE. He became the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty which ruled the Islamic empire from the mid 7<sup>th</sup> to mid 8<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>249</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 10.



funeral prayer with them and takes the coffin with Ali's dead body and leaves. After a while Ali's children are curious about this mysterious person. They follow this person and unmask his identity. When they unmask this person's face, they realize that this mysterious person with the face hidden is their father Ali.<sup>250</sup> When his children ask Ali what kind of secret this is,<sup>251</sup> Ali responds that it is such a secret that only the competent ones can understand.<sup>252</sup>

By using this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that believers do not die, but instead migrate from one house to another.<sup>253</sup> He goes further and claims that the bodies of the prophets and the saints do not disintegrate after their death. He discusses the assumption of Muhammad and suggests that after the assumption, Muhammad's soul stayed in the heavens, while only his body stayed on earth.<sup>254</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that Muhammad died figuratively, but in reality he has been alive.<sup>255</sup>

In the beginning of the *Tarikatname*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi tells another story about Ali.<sup>256</sup> In this story, the Prophet Muhammad encounters a giant. The giant tells him that once he was about to eat a human and a boy came to the rescue. This boy slaps the giant, pushes the giant's hands to his back and ties the giant's two thumbs together with a date palm leaf and tells him "would

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<sup>250</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 11.

<sup>251</sup> "Ya sahib-i velayet bu ner sırdur?"

<sup>252</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 11. "İy ciger-kuşelerüm, bu bir sırdur ki bunı girü ehli bilür."

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> <sup>255</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 11-12. "Ve dahı peygamber aleyhisselam mecazen ölmüşdür, hakiki diridür."

<sup>256</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 4-6.

you eat a human again?”<sup>257</sup> The giant tries to untie his thumbs but fails and gets wounded and covered with blood instead. Afterwards, the giant complains about his situation to Adam. Adam could not resolve the giant’s problem and advises him to wait until the time of Noah. The giant awaits the time of Noah with patience and when Noah’s time comes, the giant asks Noah to resolve his problem. Noah could not resolve this problem so he advises the giant to await Abraham. In this same manner, neither Abraham, nor Moses, nor Solomon nor David could resolve the giant’s problem.<sup>258</sup>

Finally, the time of Muhammad comes and the giant complains about his situation to Muhammad. After hearing the giant, Muhammad commands all of his companions to come and pass by him. All of the companions pass by Muhammad. Once Ali passes in front of them, the giant recognized Ali. Ali was the boy that slapped him and tied his hands and the giant informs Muhammad about it. Muhammad asks Ali whether it was he that slapped the giant and tied his hands. Once Ali confirms that it was him, Muhammad asks him to solve this situation. Ali obeys but demands one condition: the giant should become a Muslim and promise to never eat humans again. The giant agrees, converts to Islam and promises not to eat humans again. Muhammad then tells Ali that this wonder belonged to Ali.<sup>259</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi claimed that the miracle belonged to Muhammad.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> “Bir dahı adem yir misün?”

<sup>258</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 7.

<sup>259</sup> “Keramet senün hakkundadır.”

<sup>260</sup> “Amma keramet dahı Peygamber aleyhisselam mucizatındandır.”; Here, Eşrefoğlu Rumi also establishes a hierarchy between Muhammad and Ali. He definitely puts Muhammad in a most prestigious category. However, Ali is in the second most prestigious position after Muhammad. Eşrefoğlu Rumi also differentiates between a miracle, which belongs to Muhammad and a wonder, which belongs to Ali. He gives neither of them the status of divinity. However, Ali’s position is more prestigious than most Sunni thinkers.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses this story to make a case for the special position of Ali in Islam. He connects Ali with the line of the Sufi *shaykhs*. In other words, since he believes that the right *shaykh* comes from the lineage of Ali, the “real” *shaykhs* would also possess similar qualities. Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that prophets and *shaykhs* (or saints) have spiritual power that transcends temporality. In other words, the mystical power of prophets and *shaykhs* can manifest itself before and after their life.<sup>261</sup> According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, this is how Ali was able to confront the giant in the time of Adam. By establishing a connection between the prophets and the saints (by Alid lineage) he attributes a special importance and abilities to the *shaykhs* like himself. These special importance and abilities could not necessarily be understandable to the common people and included performing wonders and the ability to influence the cosmos in mystical ways.

#### **2.4.4. Similarities of Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s Piety with Shiism**

Eşrefoğlu Rumi separates this image of Ali from the image of the first three caliphs who were respected in many interpretations of Sunni Islam. He advises the followers of the Sufi path to love Ali more than all other caliphs.<sup>262</sup> Even though Eşrefoğlu Rumi is self-consciously Sunni, this sacralization of Ali is reminiscent of some Shiite interpretations of Islam.

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<sup>261</sup> “Bunı şöyle bil ki nebinün ve velinün ruhaniyyeti sıfatı, sırrı kendünden ön, kendinden sonra zahir olur.”

<sup>262</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 12.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi's emphasis on the "right" *shaykh*, who is supposed to have an Alid lineage, resembles the position of the Shiite *imam*<sup>263</sup>, who is also supposed to have an Alid lineage, according to Shiite political theory.<sup>264</sup> Shiite political and religious theorists emphasized the necessity of *imams* of Alid lineages. These *imams* were and are considered the spiritual and political leaders of the Islamic community, not unlike the *shaykhs* with Alid lineages in Eşrefoğlu Rumi's theology, who are supposed to be leaders of Sufi orders. This spiritual leadership could appear the most religiously prestigious from the perspective of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. In contrast to some interpretations of Shiite political theory, spiritual leadership does not necessarily translate into political leadership of the community.

The Shiite conceptualization of the *imam* perceives the *imams* as sinless<sup>265</sup> human beings.<sup>266</sup> In addition, this conceptualization challenges the legitimacy of the first three caliphs.<sup>267</sup> The similarity between the ideal Sufi *shaykh* with Alid lineage and the Shiite conceptualization of an *imam* prior to the Ottoman-Safavid conflict of the 16<sup>th</sup> century has led some scholars to argue that Sufism and Shi'ism experienced a rapprochement.<sup>268</sup> Could scholars consider a similarity in the form of emphasis on the position of the Ali as a "rapprochement" between Sufism and Shi'ism? Is this similarity simply the feature of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Sufi ideals? To what extent was the reverence for Ali and Alid lineage a characteristic shared by Sunni Sufi figures of the age?

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<sup>263</sup> According to the Shiites, the leader of the Islamic community possessing an Alid lineage.

<sup>264</sup> Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 87.

<sup>265</sup> *Masum*.

<sup>266</sup> Heinz Halm, *Shi'ism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 44.

<sup>267</sup> Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 87.

<sup>268</sup> Terzioğlu, "Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization," 91.

## 2.5. Sufi Ideals of Eşrefoğlu Rumi in His *Tarikatname*

### 2.5.1. The Right *Shaykh*

Eşrefoğlu Rumi's *Tarikatname* suggests that possessing a "rightful" *shaykh* is a must and a disciple can only succeed with a proper *shaykh*. Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that a person who does not have a rightful master in the Sufi path will have the devil as their guide.<sup>269</sup> He encourages potential disciples of the Sufi path to search for a "rightful" *shaykh*.<sup>270</sup> The search for the right *shaykh* has a substantial importance in Eşrefoğlu Rumi's understanding of Islamic piety. This is made clear by his particular emphasis on the spiritual guidance of the right *shaykh*. This emphasis on the centrality of the spiritual guidance of the right *shaykh* may be the single most important reason why Eşrefoğlu Rumi wrote a manual like *Tarikatname*.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi establishes a hierarchy of discipleship. He considers the *shaykhs* to be the spiritual guides of the Sufi novices while God is the spiritual guide of the *shaykhs*.<sup>271</sup> He suggests that the *shaykhs* possess human as well as angelic characteristics.<sup>272</sup> For this reason, he favors a strong adherence to the authority of the *shaykh* on the part of the disciples.

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<sup>269</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 29. This is similar to what Bayazid Bastami said: "The leader of one who does not have a master is Satan" Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 117.

<sup>270</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 2-3.

<sup>271</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 28. "Talib mürşidi şeyhdur ve şeyh mürşidi Allah'dur."

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. "Ve şeyhun cihet-i melekisi ve cihet-i beşerişi vardır."

Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that following a *shaykh* is more important than completing a pilgrimage.<sup>273</sup> He quotes Ibn Arabi as a further affirmation of this view. He points out that one should not go to the pilgrimage without the permission of one's parents. However, he suggests that one should find and reach the right *shaykh* even without the permission of one's parents.<sup>274</sup> He argues that the primary reason for pilgrimage is to reach paradise, whereas the primary reason to follow a *shaykh* is to reach God.<sup>275</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi quotes al-Ghazzali's<sup>276</sup> warning that false *shaykhs* can lead Muslims down the path of heresy.<sup>277</sup> He claims that there are so many people around claiming to be *shaykhs*.<sup>278</sup> For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides his readers with several guidelines to distinguish the "genuine *shaykh*" from false ones. He quotes ibn Arabi and suggests that a correct *shaykh* should have four characteristics.<sup>279</sup> The *shaykh* should be *alim* (learned, scholar), he should follow the shari'a without introducing "innovations" (*bid'at*), he should be ready to provide guidance and assistance and be capable of doing so, and he should be a descendant of the

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<sup>273</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 28.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. "Bir kiři Ka'be'ye gider olsa, atası ve anası komasalar, Ka'be dahı kendüye borc olmasa, gitmemek gerekdür. Ve eger mürşide gider olsa, komasalar rızasuz gitmek gerekdür."

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. "Zira Ka'be'ye varmakdan murad, cehennemden kurtulup cennete girmeg-içündür. Bunlar arzu-yı nefsdür, mertebe-i ıřkda bular küfrdür ve şeyha varmakdan murad Allah'dur ve Allah'ı bulmag-içundur ve dahı kabir-i Muhammed'i ziyaret itmekden şeyhı ziyaret itmek yıgdur zira anda varmakdan murad, taş ve toprak ziyaret ider ve şeyha varmag-ıla ruh-ı Muhammed'i ziyaret ider."

<sup>276</sup> İmam-ı Gazali (Turkish) or Al-Ghazali (d.1111) was an Islamic scholar from the city of Tus in Khurasan. He worked in the famous madrasa of Nizamiyya in Baghdad. He mastered Islamic theology, law, and philosophy. Later, he began advancing on the Sufi path. He is known to be a figure who helped the reconciliation of Sufism and juristic Islam. Mustafa Çağrıçı, "Gazzâlî," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/gazzali#1>.; W. Montgomery Watt, "Al-Ghazali," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Vol. II, ed. B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat and J. Schacht (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 1038-1041.; Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 231.

<sup>277</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 3.

<sup>278</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 3. "Şeyham diyici mübtediler çokdur."

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

Prophet Muhammad and Ali.<sup>280</sup> Spencer Trimingham suggests that the *silsila* (chain of succession) of the *tariqas* (Sufi orders)<sup>281</sup> are usually traced back to Ali, and sometimes to Abu Bakr or Umar.<sup>282</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi does not consider reading of the Quran to be a replacement for following a *shaykh*.<sup>283</sup> According to him, a higher level of piety may only be obtained with the spiritual guidance of a *shaykh*. He criticizes the people who consider the Quran alone to be their master.<sup>284</sup> This critique is intended to place the spiritual emphasis on the person of the spiritual guide (*shaykh*) rather than piety through self-study by and the reading of the Quran. Eşrefoğlu Rumi's argument against self-made piety demonstrates the significance he attributes to the position of a *shaykh*. In this case, it is given a status higher even than reading the most prestigious and holy book of Islam, the Qur'an on one's own. <sup>285</sup>

Among the duties of the right *shaykh*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi includes the ability to appoint a successor.<sup>286</sup> He considers this appointment a necessity for the *shaykh*. He suggests that the

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<sup>280</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 3. "Evvel oldur ki şeyh olan 'alim ola, 'amil ola ya'ni 'ilm-i zahirde kamil ola ve hem 'ilmi-y-ile 'amel ide. İkinci, şeri'atı kamil ola, bidat bulunmaya. Üçüncü, her kişinin müşkili katında hall ü tamam ola ya'ni her fende mahir ola, levhine, alemine nazır ola yani levh-ı mahfuza ve levh-ı insana nazır ola. Ya'ni levh-ı mahfuza ve levh-ı insana nazır ola. Ya'ni her kişi katına geldiği vakt ana nazar ide nur velyetiyle, anun ezelin ana göre terbiyyet ide. Ve dahı görinen 'alem ki 'alem-i şehadetdür ve gözikmeyen 'alem ki 'alem-i ervahdür bulara nazır ola tasarruf ana ısmarlanmış ola mertebe-i Muhammed'de mahir ola. Dördüncü alamet budur ki silsilesi sahihçe Muhammed'e ve Hazret-i Ali'ye çıka ya'ni kendü şeyh-ı kamil ve anun şeyh-ı kamil olup min vechi't-tertib peygambere çıka, halifeye ulaşmaya."

<sup>281</sup> *Tariqa* means path. It is often translated as Sufi path and Sufi orders who are organized to follow the Sufi path.

<sup>282</sup> Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, 149.

<sup>283</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 2.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 3.

successor of the *shaykh* that is appointed by the previous *shaykh* himself is a legitimate one. It is the disciple's duty to recognize and adhere to the successor *shaykh*. According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, another duty of the *shaykh* is to lead the disciple towards God. He suggests that the right *shaykh* is the one who is able to make his disciple (truly) repent so that he (the disciple) may become free of sins.<sup>287</sup> At the same time, the right *shaykh* is the one who will lead the disciple towards the contemplation of God by reciting the affirmation of faith (*the shahada*).<sup>288</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi believes it is not unusual for the right *shaykh* to perform miraculous deeds. For instance, he suggests that Şeyh Muhyiddin<sup>289</sup> was known to travel to many places at once. Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that while Şeyh Muhyiddin was visiting many different locations, his body was sitting in his convent with his *dervishes*. Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that it was in fact Şeyh Muhyiddin's "spiritual feature" that was involved in conversations with his *dervishes*.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 3. "Mürşid-i kamil oldur ki bir mübtedi talibe tevbe virdügi vakt günahdan pak eyleye-kıla."

<sup>288</sup> Ibid. "'La ilahe illal-lah' didügi vakt Allah-ıla anun arasında hicab ref' ide ve 'Muhammedün resulu'l-lah' didügi vakt Hakk'ı müşahede itdüre."

<sup>289</sup> Şeyh Muhyiddin refers to Ibn Arabi.

<sup>290</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 4. "Rivayetdür ki Hatemü'l-velaye Şeyh Muhyi'd-din radiya'l-lahu te'ala anı gice nice yilerde bulındı; lakin mübarek vücudı hankahında oturup dervişlere muhabbet iderdi. Pes o sohbetlerde bulunup sohbet viren ruhaniyyet sıfatı idi."



### 2.5.2. The *Qutb*

Eşrefoğlu Rumi believes in the existence of a *qutb*.<sup>291</sup> *Qutb* is a spiritual leader, often times a *shaykh*, who guides humanity in each age.<sup>292</sup> The descendants of the Muhammad-Ali-Husayn line are believed to continue the mission of guiding humanity. Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests the existence of different *qutbs*. Some of them live in different parts of the world. In a different instance, Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that Şeyh Muhyiddin is given the position of the *qutb*. However, Şeyh Muhyiddin (i.e. Ibn Arabi) refused this position claiming that he did not deserve to be the *qutb*.<sup>293</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi interprets this story by suggesting that each land or region has one *qutb*, which differs from the spiritually higher *qutb al-aqtab*.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi points out that in each age, there is only one *qutb al-aqtab* (Poles of Poles, i.e. a superior *qutb*). He refers to the *qutb al-aqtab* as the most perfect among the perfect (*kamil-i mükemmel*) and he is considered spiritually higher than others.<sup>294</sup> It has been suggested that the Word of God manifests itself into some chosen mystics as the *qutb*. However, with time this position became popular and widely used, which lead to its demise.<sup>295</sup> The distinction of *qutb* and *qutb al-aqtab* could be seen in this perspective. In other words, *qutb al-aqtab* aims to retain the spiritual significance of the original *qutb*.

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<sup>291</sup> Spiritual pole or axis.

<sup>292</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 25.

<sup>293</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 25.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 163.

### 2.5.3. The Disciple

Eşrefoğlu Rumi recommends the potential Sufi disciples to know and find the perfect *shaykh* (*şeyh-i kamil*).<sup>296</sup> He suggests that it is solely the disciple's responsibility to find his *shaykh*. He argues that if the disciple did not do his research and finds the wrong *shaykh*, his claim to *dervishhood* would be in question and may not be acceptable. He uses the analogy of finding the right creed in the example of finding the right *shaykh*.<sup>297</sup>

He suggests that the disciple should have a strong belief in his *shaykh*. This strong belief includes complete obedience. In other words, the disciple must obey his *shaykh*'s orders without question. He condemns the practice of repudiating the real *shaykh* and abandoning him. He uses the analogy of apostasy into the practice of repudiating and abandoning the rightful *shaykh*. Thus he suggests that those who repudiate the rightful *shaykh* should receive the same punishment as apostates.<sup>298</sup>

“*Tarikatda hak şeyhdan bey’at itmiş kişi yüz çevürse, ana münkir olsa veyahud halka uysa veya mübtedilere uysa mürted olur, katli halal olur. Ve eger mübtedilerden hak şeyha gelse ca’izdür; mü’min-iken Müselman mertebesine irişmiş gibidür. Ve eger halifesinden dahı yüz çevürse şeyhdan dahı yüz çevürmiş gibidür, girü mürted olur.*”<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 25.

<sup>297</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 54.

<sup>298</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 26.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. Translation: “In the Sufi order, if one who has pledged allegiance to the right *shaykh* turns away from him, [and thus] repudiates him, or joins (or listens to) the common people (*halk*), or joins the ‘innovators’ (*mübtet’iler*) becomes an apostate, so his murder becomes permissible. Even if one turns away from his (the *shaykh*'s) halife, it is like one turns away from one's *shaykh*, he becomes an apostate.”

This passage proves one more time that Eşrefoğlu Rumi considers the Sufi path to be the highest spiritual level of Islam. For this reason, even if it has its own rules and logic, Sufism is for him, the most central part of the Islamic faith and practice, rather than an alternative or complementary part of Islam.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses the family analogy to reflect on the disciple-*shaykh* relationship. He suggests that the disciples are like young boys (sons), and the *halifes* (of the *shaykhs*) are like mothers, and *shaykhs* are like fathers.<sup>300</sup> In this family structure, the master is Muhammad. The spirit of Ali functions as an intermediary between the *shaykh* and the spirit of Muhammad. At the same time, the spirit of Muhammad is also an intermediary between the spirit of Ali and the divine spirit.<sup>301</sup> Here, one realizes that Eşrefoğlu Rumi points out that the *shaykhs* play an active role in the spiritual development of the disciples. In addition, one also notices the roles that Ali and Muhammad (at least in the spiritual realm) are playing in the spiritual achievement of the disciples.

#### 2.5.4. The Holy People

Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses several groups of holy people<sup>302</sup> in detail that exist in his Sufi cosmology.<sup>303</sup> In this section, he discusses Muhammad, other prophets, and the four caliphs

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<sup>300</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 27.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 7. “Bunı dahı bil kim resul ve nebiyy-i ulu’l-azm, hulefa ve nesli, kutb, imameyn, efrad, evtad, bûdela, nukaba, nûceba, ümena, recebiyyun kim?”

<sup>303</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 7.

(including a discussion on Ali<sup>304</sup>). He briefly mentions the life stories of the four caliphs. He mentions all the names of the twelve *imams*.<sup>305</sup> He also talks about other holy people such as *abdals*<sup>306</sup>, *qutbs*, saints, *dervishes*, *shaykhs*, *imams*. He explains and presents these people and their relationship to his Sufi piety. He also talks about a group of people who are called *nukaba*.

He suggests that these are three hundred people consisting of men as well as righteous women.<sup>307</sup> One group of forty holy people are called the *nüceba*.<sup>308</sup> Another forty holy people are called the *recebiyyin*.<sup>309</sup> The *recebiyyin* are so called because they join among the people in the month of Receb. While being a saintly group, they live among the common people. The identity of the *recebiyyin* is not evident to the people around them.<sup>310</sup> These groups of people fit into the general category of “hidden saints” that has been present in certain Sufi and popular religiosities.<sup>311</sup> These “hidden saints” have been discussed comprehensively by the famous Sufi thinker Ibn Arabi.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Discussed above in the section about Ali.

<sup>305</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 13.

<sup>306</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 20-1.

<sup>307</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 22.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 22.

<sup>310</sup> Month in the Hijri (Islamic, lunar) calendar. “Bunlar receb ayının evvelinde halk içinde gelürler ta ahir olunca.”

<sup>311</sup> Nikolay Antov, *The Ottoman Wild West*, 74. Süleyman Uludağ, TDVİA, *Ricalü'l-Gayb*.

<sup>312</sup> Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of 'Ibn Arabi* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993) 103-115.

### 2.5.5. The Sufi Doctrine in *Tarikatname*

Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a discussion of the relationship between three fundamental concepts in Islamic thought: sharia, *tariqa*, and *haqiqa*.<sup>313</sup> He argues that the sharia constitutes the commands of Muhammad to his ummah. According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, the *tariqa* is to oppose the nafs, and the *haqiqa* is to join a *tariqa*<sup>314</sup>, thus seeking a relationship between oneself and God. He argues that these three concepts are not in opposition to each other. Instead they all exist in unity.<sup>315</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that those who claim that there are mistakes in the sharia<sup>316</sup>, and talk about *haqiqa* and *tariqa* instead have entered onto a wrong path, which he finds satanic. He warns against *shaykhs* who possess satanical powers.<sup>317</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi quotes the Prophet and suggests that all believers<sup>318</sup> are brothers.<sup>319</sup> However, he also distinguishes between concepts such as the brotherhood of sharia, and the brotherhood of *tariqa* and of *haqiqa*. He claims that every person who utters the phrase of unity<sup>320</sup> (all Muslims?) are brothers of sharia. Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that those who are

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<sup>313</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 6-7. The terms are respectively “şariat,” “tarikat” and “hakikat” in the text. *Haqiqa* comes from al-Haq, which can be translated as real or true. Thus, *haqiqa* refers to the reality, a concept used by the Sufis referring to the esoteric truth that one needs to discover in the Sufi path.

<sup>314</sup> “Ve hakikat sülukdur.” This idea is similar to the idea expressed by Mirghani: “...nor you can approach the Reality (Haqiqa) except through the tariqa...” Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 159.

<sup>315</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 7.

<sup>316</sup> Here, he probably is referring to the antinomian Sufis. Some anti-Sufi authors used the practices of antinomian Sufis to attack Sufism. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 158. For Sufis like Eşrefoğlu Rumi, sharia was indispensable for Sufism.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Muslims.

<sup>319</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 29. “Küll-i mü’min kardaşdur.”

<sup>320</sup> The phrase of unity (kelime-i tevhid) is “La ilahe illa’l-lah.”

disciples of the same order, are considered brothers of *tariqa* and all Sufis whom God manifested himself upon as brothers of *haqiqa*.<sup>321</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi's piety involves several hierarchical spiritual levels, which possess their own logic and framework. He suggests that each person should follow their own spiritual level.<sup>322</sup> He counts the spiritual levels such as *fetva* (judicial opinion), *takva* (fear of God), *zühhd* (asceticism), *ışk* (divine love), *irfan* (mystical wisdom), *fisk* (vice).<sup>323</sup> He also suggests a structure of three spiritual levels including a beginner, an intermediate and an advanced spiritual levels.<sup>324</sup> These three spiritual levels are respectively associated with the concepts of *zühhd*, *ışk* and *irfan*.<sup>325</sup>

#### 2.5.6. History in *Tarikatname*

Eşrefoğlu Rumi explains that in the early Islamic period, the people around the Prophet were called the “companions of the Prophet.”<sup>326</sup> In the next generation, those who joined them were called the “followers” (*tabi'in*). In the following generation, the newcomers were called the “followers of the followers” (*etba'ut-tabi'in*). Afterwards, he points out that there were groups of people who are called “ascetics and the praying people” (*ühhad ve ubbad*). After this

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<sup>321</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 29.

<sup>322</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 32. “Bu halün mertebesine ırmeyince, ol hal ile hallanmak reva degüldür.”

<sup>323</sup> Ibid. Nitekim eydür: “Mertebe-i fetva, mertebe-i takvada küfrdür ve mertebe-i zühhd, mertebe-i ‘ışkda küfrdür ve mertebe-i ışk, mertebe-i irfanda küfrdür ve dahı mertebe-i fiskda mertebe-i zühdden dem vurmak küfrdür ve dahı mertebe zühdde mertebe-i ışkdan dem vurmak küfrdür.”

<sup>324</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 32.

<sup>325</sup> Asceticism, (divine) love and (spiritual/Sufi) wisdom.

<sup>326</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 38. The term in the text is *Ashab-ı Resul*.

period, he claims that innovations took place and each group claimed that they have the ascetics and the “praying people.” In this period, the people who are known as the Sufis emerged.<sup>327</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that a group of people that call themselves Sufis emerged several generations after the time of the Prophet. However, he also suggests that several Sufi practices, rituals and principles existed in the time of the Prophet. For instance, he mentions the communal *zikr* practice that Muhammad and Ali performed.<sup>328</sup> Thus, Eşrefoğlu Rumi attempts to prove that the Sufi practices and rituals have always been at the center of the Islamic faith.

#### 2.5.7. Asceticism

The encouragement of asceticism and ascetic behavior is one of the cornerstones of Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s thought. He encourages a disdain for worldliness and positions this disdain at the core of his Sufi ideals.<sup>329</sup> The praise for asceticism and disdain for worldliness is ubiquitous in his works. Eşrefoğlu Rumi quotes a Hadith to encourage ascetic behavior. According to this Hadith, the Prophet said that “the world is the prison of the believers and the heaven of infidels.”<sup>330</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that in order to abandon the world and embrace an ascetic lifestyle, one should abandon one’s family, which means one should leave wives, sons and

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<sup>327</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 38.

<sup>328</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 50.

<sup>329</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 30.

<sup>330</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 41. “Dünya mü’minlerün zindanıdur ve kafirlerün cennetidir.”

daughters behind.<sup>331</sup> He conveys the idea that one can only reach God when one leaves all attachments to this world behind. In this pursuit, if one leaves everything behind but still keeps love for worldly things, he would still be considered “person of this world.”<sup>332</sup> In other words, in order to abandon the world and embrace an ascetic lifestyle, one should also leave “the people of the world behind.” Eşrefoğlu Rumi points out that one should leave everything for God’s sake and not for anything worldly or any other purpose.<sup>333</sup>

Eating and hunger are concepts that are placed at the center of the ascetic life. Eşrefoğlu Rumi is making the case that eating food for pleasure and comfort is not permissible for the *dervish*. His argument is that eating is permissible the same way pork is permissible for Muslims. He explains this statement by claiming that pork is permissible for Muslims only if it is the only available food and one eats it so as not to starve to death. In the same way, the *dervish* is supposed to eat food only not to starve to death.<sup>334</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi applies the same logic to the other needs of humans as well. The *dervish* should wear only enough clothing not to get cold, eat only enough food not to starve to death.<sup>335</sup> He quotes Ibn Arabi to suggest that “the *dervish* should act only if there is a necessity.”<sup>336</sup> The logic of acting only if there is a necessity is because the Sufi can focus on his or her own true

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<sup>331</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 30.

<sup>332</sup> In the text: “ehl-i dünya.”

<sup>333</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 30.

<sup>334</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 30.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 31; “Ez-zaruratü takrizu’l-mefruzati.”



goal which is abstaining from the worldly needs and attempting to connect with God in a mystical way.

#### 2.5.8. The *Tariqa*

Eşrefoğlu Rumi presents the *tariqa* as where the *dervishes* act upon a feeling of a brotherhood. He suggests that this kind of brotherhood is only possible if they share their material goods among each other. He claims that in the *tariqa*, there is no private ownership, and everything belongs to God.<sup>337</sup> For instance, if one of the *tariqa* brothers is poor, the rich one is supposed to share half of his or her own goods with the poor one.<sup>338</sup> By placing an emphasis on this sense of sharing private property, Eşrefoğlu Rumi seeks to promote social solidarity among the *dervishes*. He claims that this notion of the sharing of goods or property is going to establish honest sense of brotherhood among the *dervishes*.<sup>339</sup>

Since they are sharing their goods among each other, one could also claim that the notion of private property is not completely abolished in his conceptualization of the ideal *tariqa*. Nevertheless, he also espouses an understanding that is transcendent of human differences, especially in the higher levels of piety. For instance, he claims that in the sharia, things belong to

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<sup>337</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 33.; “Zira tarikatda ne senün vardur ve ne benüm, ya’ni Allah’undur.”

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 33.

people, and in the *tariqa*, they all share worldly goods. In *haqiqa*, there is no difference between individuals.<sup>340</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi considers Ali as the ultimate and perfect saint. He suggests that Sufi rituals such as wearing a *tac*<sup>341</sup> and a cloak<sup>342</sup> are part of the Prophet's *Sunna*.<sup>343</sup> He claims that the ritual *tac* descended to Muhammad from the heaven. He further claims that Muhammad entrusted the *tac*, the cloak, the Sufi way, and the *imama* to Ali.<sup>344</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that, in his Sufi piety, the most virtuous prophet is Muhammad, and the most virtuous saint is Ali.<sup>345</sup> He further claims that there is no opposition to this doctrine, except for the Kharijites. Eşrefoğlu Rumi accuses the Kharijites of being worse than infidels, and goes further claiming that their murder is religiously considered a good deed.<sup>346</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi tells another story from Ibn Arabi to emphasize the significance of the *tac*.<sup>347</sup> In this story, the Prophet performs the *sama* ritual and his headgear falls from his head. His companions make four hundred pieces out of it, and they lose eight pieces of the whole headgear. After this they contemplate on what could have happened to the lost eight pieces. In that instance, the angel Gabriel comes and tells that they have taken the lost eight pieces and

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<sup>340</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 32. “Su’al bu sözden ki şeri’atda şu senün, bu benüm, tarikata ne senün var, ne benüm; hakikatde ne sen var, ne ben var.”

<sup>341</sup> Ceremonial headgear that Sufis wear.

<sup>342</sup> Ceremonial dress that Sufis wear.

<sup>343</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 54. Sunna is the name for the example of Muhammad, which Muslims believe that they should emulate in order to lead a more pious life.

<sup>344</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 54. “Ve Resul aleyhisselam Hazreti hayatında, hırkayı, irşadı, imameti Hazret-i Ali’ye ısmarlamışdur.”

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 54.

<sup>347</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 55.

hung seven of them to the seven gates of the heaven and hung the last one the gate of God's heaven.<sup>348</sup> When, Muhammad ascends to the heaven, he sees those eight pieces. Afterwards, the companions ask to the Prophet what should they do with these eight pieces. The Prophet replies that they should attach those pieces to the top of their *tac*.<sup>349</sup>

With this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi connects the Sufi headgear, the *tac*, with central pieces of Islamic faith, which is the life and deeds of the Prophet. At the same time, in this story, the Prophet is performing the *sama*, which is another Sufi ritual that Eşrefoğlu Rumi endorses, praises and considers a central piece of Islamic piety. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is successfully establishing connections between the Sufi practices, rituals and the main elements of the Islamic faith. This story is another example that for him, Sufism is only the most perfect manifestation or exercise of the Islamic faith.

### 2.5.9. Ecstasy

Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that drinking and drunkenness are not desirable practices for Muslims. He discusses drunkenness as a problem that can cause a lot of trouble for Muslims. However, he suggests that those of the Sufi path can reach a level of ecstasy<sup>350</sup> in which they are no longer themselves. As an example, he presents the story of the famous Sufi Bayezid-i

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<sup>348</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 55. ““Ya Resula'l-lah, ol sekiz pareyi biz aldük. Yidisın yidi gök kapusına asduk ve birin arşu'l-lah kapusına' didi.”

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 45-6. In the text terms used for ecstasy or drunkenness are: Bengilig, esrüklig, mestlig.

Bistami.<sup>351</sup> In this story, Bayezid reaches a level of ecstasy or *fana*<sup>352</sup> in which he claims that “in his cloak, there is nothing but God.”<sup>353</sup> After Bayezid’s stage of ecstasy ends, his disciples tell him that they heard him claiming that in his cloak there is nothing but God. Bayezid denies that he said this. He tells his disciples that if he says it in the future, they can stab him. The next time, he says the same phrase, his disciples do stab him, but they realize that it does not work and the knife does not touch his body.<sup>354</sup> Following this, Bayezid argues that when he uttered that phrase, the words were not coming from him, but from God. For this reason, his disciples were not able to stab him.<sup>355</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses this story to illustrate how those who have advanced in the Sufi path can reach to levels in which they lose their self (*wajd*), become “possessed” (*majdhub*), and their existence temporarily join God’s existence.<sup>356</sup> At that point of ecstasy, they can not be judged as a human being, until they began to feel like a human again. His argument about Mansur al-

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<sup>351</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 46. Bayezid-i Bistami (d. 877-8) was a famous Sufi from Bistam in Iran. A collection of anecdotes about him has existed in the Sufi tradition. For this reason, he has been extremely influential on later Sufis. He is considered to be one of the two great early representative of the “ecstatic” in Islamic mysticism. H. Ritter, “Abu Yazid,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Vol. I, ed. H.A.R. Gibb, J.H. Kramers and E. Lévi-Provençal (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 162-163.

<sup>352</sup> “Fena” in the text. In Sufism, this is stage, in which the Sufi is losing his or her nafs, and existence, and joins a mystical union with God.

<sup>353</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 46. “Ene fi cübbeti leyse ma-siva’l-lah’ didi. Yani Benüm cübbem içinde Allah’dan gayrı kimse yokdur. didi mestliginden.”

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Trimingham discusses how the Sufis were not responsible for their actions in this ecstatic stage when losing their selves. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 150. For a similar, discussion by Karamustafa: Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*, 150.

Hallaj<sup>357</sup> is the same argument. What he had said was the Truth because he had lost his self and the words he spoke were actually coming from God. For this reason, their actions in a state of ritual ecstasy are considered a normative manifestation of Sufi piety, rather than any kind of heresy.

### 2.5.10. Reaching God for God's Sake

Another Sufi ideal Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses in *Tarikatname* is reaching God for God's sake. He associates this behavior exclusively with the people of the Sufi path.<sup>358</sup> In other words, his piety is not only very *shaykh*-centered but also clearly distinguishes between the common people and the people of the Sufi path. His statement that “the sins of the Sufis are preferable to the goodness of the common people” encapsulates this ideal.<sup>359</sup> He claims that, as opposed to the Sufis, the common people do good for fame, and not for God.<sup>360</sup> With this understanding, Eşrefoğlu Rumi establishes a spiritual hierarchy of Islamic religiosities and attributes different spiritual levels for people according to their relationship to his Sufi theology.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922) was a famous Sufi figure from Iran. He is especially famous for uttering the words *Ana'l-Haqq* (I am the Truth) referring to his mystical union with God. He was accused of heresy and executed. Since his death, he inspired many Sufis to pursue the mystical path. He is considered to be one of the two great early representative of the “ecstatic” in Islamic mysticism. L. Massignon and L. Gardet, “Al-Halladj,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Vol. III, ed. B. Lewis, V.L. Ménage, Ch. Pellet and J. Schacht (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 99-104.

<sup>358</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 38.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> I will discuss further the popularization of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's piety in the third chapter.

### 2.5.11. Repentance

According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, repentance is a Sufi virtue that the pious should perform in order to receive God's blessing and salvation. He argues that holding the hand of the *shaykh* while repenting would be like holding the hand of the Prophet and repenting.<sup>362</sup> He suggests that a person, who holds the *shaykh*'s hand and repents, while knowing what he is doing, would be considered a *tariqa* brother of Muhammad. According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, this person would reach high spiritual positions, such as of a saint.<sup>363</sup> Here, Eşrefoğlu Rumi once again affirms the role of the *shaykh* as the deputy of Muhammad as well as the role of Muhammad as the highest master in the Sufi hierarchy.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi encourages his audience to repent and would like to convince his audience that it is beneficial to continuously repent. He affirms that dying after repenting would be like dying with firm belief.<sup>364</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi reminds his audience that repenting is beneficial because death can be right around the corner for people. For this reason he encourages people to continuously think about death in their daily lives, which would lead them to be repent more often and pursue a more pious life.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 27. "Amma şeyh elin alup tevbe itmek heman Resul Hazreti elin almış gibidür."

<sup>363</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 27. "Bir kişi hak şeyhun elin tutsa, tevbe itse, tevbenün dahı sırrını bilse, dahı ziyade amel idemese, velinin üzerine farz olan nesneleri ödese, dahı itikad-ı sahiha ile gitse magfur gider. Ol vakt ki şeyh ekşn aldı, külli ol yolda geçen dervişler ile, hatta Resul aşeyhi's-selam Hazreti'le tarikat kardaşı oldu, kıyametde anlara hod kardaşın dilemek vacib olmışdur. Bir kişiyi dilerler, alurlar. Ana 'azab u ukubetden havf yokdur. Eger şol didüğümüz hal ile giderse, tenezzül itmez ise, eger ziyade 'amel iderse, hod niçe mertebelere irür, veli olur, nice kişikere şefa'at ider."

<sup>364</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 40.

<sup>365</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 40.

## 2.5.12. The Letters

In several parts of the *Tarikatname*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi cites the letters of certain words.<sup>366</sup> He cites these letters to convey the meaning of those words. In other words, he associates those concepts with the letters that they are composed of. For example, when he defines the meaning of the term “Sufi,” he introduces several concepts that defines Sufism that starts with the letters that the word Sufi<sup>367</sup> is written in the Arabic alphabet.<sup>368</sup> In a different instance, Eşrefoğlu Rumi mentions the word *tac*, which is the ceremonial headgear in Sufi orders. He and argues that the letters that compose *tac*, ta, alif, and cim, are signs for completeness (*tamamlig*), straightness (*togruluk*) and beauty (*cemal*).<sup>369</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi often uses this method in order to convey certain ideas related to these concepts in a more efficient and memorable way. Even though he disdains the people known as the Hurufis and accuses them of heresy, could his interest in these letters be a sign of Hurufi influence that was integrated into different layers of Ottoman intellectual and religious spectrum?

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<sup>366</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 35.

<sup>367</sup> These letters are “sad,” “vav,” “fi,” and “ya.” For instance, for the letter “sad” he mentions concepts that start with “sad” such as “suleha,” “sıdk” and “safa.”

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 55. “Amma tac üç harfdür. ‘T’ tamalığa işaretdür. ‘Elif’ togrılığa işaretdür. ‘Cim’ cemale işaretdür.”

### 2.5.13. *Tarikatname* and Authority

The work *Tarikatname* begins with the advice to obey and be loyal to God, which includes praying to God and obeying the Prophet.<sup>370</sup> This obedience to religion includes an obedience to the Sunna (the prophetic tradition) and to the Sharia. Eşrefoğlu Rumi also advises to obey the caliphs, whom he defines as those who command you towards the divine.<sup>371</sup> He indicates that the ulema should support the caliphs and that people should be loyal to the caliphs. The great *shaykhs* supported the caliphs who are the perfect *shaykhs*.<sup>372</sup> Here, he contrasts the ulema and the great *shaykhs*. According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, the great *shaykhs* are in a more spiritually prestigious position than the ulema. This fact emphasizes the competence of the perfect *shaykhs* over the competence of the caliphs, and the great *shaykhs* over the ulema.

In a section of the *Tarikatname* specifically dedicated to authority and obedience, Eşrefoğlu Rumi expresses his preference for which characteristics the right caliph should possess. He invites people to obey the caliphs. But Eşrefoğlu Rumi seems to distinguish between the actual ruling caliphs and those who deserve to be caliphs. He argues that the real caliph should be a person who is a perfect *shaykh* (*mürşid-i kamil*).<sup>373</sup> His understanding of the ideal caliph or those who deserve to be caliph involved a religious role more than a political role.

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<sup>370</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 1.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid. "...ve dahı ulu'l-emre de muti olun, yani sizi hak üzre emr idiciye."

<sup>372</sup> Ibid. "Amma ulema-i zahir rahimehumu'l-lah ulu'l-emr begleri tutmuşlar; yani anlara da asi olmayalar. Amma meşayih-i kübra radiya'l-lahu anhüm ulu'l-emr mürşid-i kamilleri tutmuşlar ki Resulu'l-lah'un salla'l-lahu aleyhi ve sellem ve alihi yirine ka'im-makamlarudur, halifetü'l-hulefalarıdır; hak yoluna mü'minleri da'vet idicileridir."

<sup>373</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 53.



According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, the ideal caliph is someone who guides people towards the divine path rather someone who is successful in governing subjects.<sup>374</sup> In addition, the ideal caliph should be perfect esoterically and exoterically.<sup>375</sup> In other words, he should protect and bestow justice upon Muslims with exoteric sciences, while educating them and making them reaching God with esoteric sciences.<sup>376</sup> According to his conceptualization, the ideal caliphate is mostly a religious institution that is strongly defined by lineage and religious capacity, rather than a political institution devoted to governance.<sup>377</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi states that those *shaykhs* refused the worldly sultanate and accepted the “otherworldly” sultanate and those lords became “figurative” caliphs, and *shaykhs* became the real caliphs.<sup>378</sup> He acknowledges that the formal, worldly caliphs who are in charge are not necessarily those who deserve to be in charge. He refers to the worldly caliphs simply as *begs* (lords). Even though Eşrefoğlu Rumi does not believe that they are in fact the real caliphs<sup>379</sup>, he still recommends that people be obedient to them.

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<sup>374</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 1. “hak yoluna mü’minleri da’vet idicileridür.”

<sup>375</sup> For a discussion of political and religious natures of the Islamic leaders: Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>376</sup> “Zahirde ve batında kamil ola zahir ilmlle Müselmanları ‘adalet ide, hıfz ide ve batın ilmlle aşıkları terbiyyet ide, Hakk’a ulaşıdura.”

<sup>377</sup> Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined*, 9. Yılmaz argues that moralist Ottoman authors distinguished between “false” and “true” rulership. According to these authors, “true rulership” can only be possible with the rulers’ spiritual and moral sophistication.

<sup>378</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 1-2. “Amma ol azizler dünya begligin terk ve ahiret sultanlığın kabul kıldılar. Pes öyle olsa mecazi ulu’l-emr begler oldı ve hakiki ulu’l-emr mürşidler oldı.”

<sup>379</sup> Real caliphs are for him the perfect *shaykhs*: “mürşid-i kamiller.”

Here, one can find Eşrefoğlu Rumi's conceptualization of the ideal political rule and ruler. Based on his ideas about Sufism and piety, it is not surprising that he favors the perfect *shaykh* as the most competent person in the world. For this reason, he endorses the view that the perfect *shaykh* will make a good ruler. However, this “*shaykh* as ruler” idea clashes with another of his ideals. His ideal pious person is one who is completely embraces the spiritual world and ascetic behavior, which is incompatible with anything worldly including political leadership. For this reason, interfering with politics is against his ideal of otherworldliness and ascetic behavior.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is merging these two seemingly opposing views with his claim that the *begs* of the time are only the figurative caliphs and the real caliphs are the perfect *shaykhs*. With this claim, he denounces the obvious interference of his favorable *shaykh* class into the political realm of the time. However, he also favors the idea that it is this class who are the most competent to govern realms, which leads him to claim that they are the real caliphs. In his conceptualization of politics, he does not question the legitimacy of the actual ruling political authorities and does not endorse any arguments that their rule is invalid. In addition, he is not only against overt opposition to the authority, but calls for the obedience of the people to the ruling class.

## 2.6. Influences on *Tarikatname*

Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides numerous references to *Hadith* in the *Tarikatname*. He uses these *Hadith* to support his points. Apart from the *Hadith*, several authors seem to play an influential role in the *Tarikatname*. Ibn Arabi's influence on Ottoman Sufism is obvious.<sup>380</sup> In the case of the *Tarikatname*, it is possible to observe this as well. Eşrefoğlu Rumi mentions his name frequently and quotes Ibn Arabi ubiquitously throughout the *Tarikatname*. In some places he names Ibn Arabi and his work *Futuhat*.<sup>381</sup> In addition, he names and quotes Jalaladdin Rumi, Bayezid Bistami and Imam Ghazzali as well.

## 2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to lay out Eşrefoğlu Rumi's ideals of Sufi piety. He endorses the Sufi ideal of reaching God for God's sake, rather than reaching God for any personal benefit. The angelic characteristic that he attributes to the *shaykhs* demonstrates the importance of the concept of *wilaya*, the companionship of God, in the cosmology of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. This *shaykh*-centered Sufi piety, which requires Alid lineage in its definition of the "right" *shaykh*, is so central for Eşrefoğlu Rumi that it is conceptualized as a higher level of piety. In this context, even performing the pilgrimage, which has been seen as one of the five pillars of Islam, as well

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<sup>380</sup> Michel Chodkiewicz. "The Diffusion of Ibn 'Arabi's Doctrine." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 9 (1991). <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/diffusion.html>.

<sup>381</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 43. *Futuhat* refers to *Al-Futuhat Al-Makkiyya*, translated as "Meccan Openings" or "Meccan Revelations." This comprehensive work includes different aspects of Islamic/Sufi doctrine.

as using the Quran as a main guide for pious behavior become secondary to following the guidance of the “right” *shaykh*.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi endorses a hierarchical vision of Islamic piety which characterizes the piety of Sufi *shaykhs* and their disciples as the embodiment of the correct doctrine. Additionally, he places this vision on a higher spiritual stage than what he considers the religiosity of the “common people.”<sup>382</sup> According to him, the piety of the common people (*avam*), the piety of the elite (*havass*) and the piety of “the elite of the elite” (*hass-ul havass*) are the three different spiritual levels of Islam.<sup>383</sup> His emphasis on a separation of a Sufi elite piety versus popular religious pieties is a very central feature in his understanding of religiosity.

The Sufi initiates are positioned between the common people and the *shaykhs*.<sup>384</sup> They are responsible for knowing and finding the right *shaykh* before they join the Sufi path.<sup>385</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi conceptualizes the action of adhering to the right *shaykh* as a necessity in Islam, but especially for those who join the Sufi path. The *shaykh* requires complete obedience from the disciples.<sup>386</sup>

I have attempted to convey that the concepts and categories that modern historians continue to utilize are shaped tremendously by our modern assumptions about religious ideas.

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<sup>382</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 38.

<sup>383</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus* (Istanbul, İnsan Yayınları, 2012), 39-41.

<sup>384</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 6.

<sup>385</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 25.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

Studying and attempting to understand the mentalities of medieval and early modern scholars and religious figures, such as Eşrefoğlu Rumi, will challenge these categories and conceptualizations and lead to a more sophisticated and non-binary understanding of medieval and early modern religiosities. A rigorous analysis of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Sufi piety and ideas will challenge the established categories of orthodoxy versus heterodoxy and Sunni Islam versus Shiite Islam.

In response to this challenge, scholars could establish a new framework and categories which do not fall into the trap of binary over-simplification. Concepts, such as orthodoxy, and heterodoxy could be used in relation to the opinions of particular individuals or institutions rather than projecting a scholar's own assumptions about different religiosities. According to this perspective, different individuals and institutions such as the scholars, Sufi leaders, and the state, can be seen as alternative and sometimes competing foci. These foci articulate their own ideas about what is the "correct" Islamic piety, and are thus all "makers of orthodoxy" on their own terms.

## Chapter 3: The Making of an Ottoman Popular Piety

### 3.1. Introduction

“*Enelhak’ sırrını faş eylerim faş*  
*Melamet olurum pinhan gerekmez*

*Sana Dost aşkı Eşrefoğlu Rumi*  
*Yeter iman dahi iman gerekmez*”<sup>387</sup>

I would reveal the secret of “*Enelhak*”<sup>388</sup>  
I would be an accursed, it (the secret) needs not stay hidden  
  
To you divine love Eşrefoğlu Rumi  
It is enough, faith does not need more faith

While in some of Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s works one can find doctrines and layers of piety completely separated from his hierarchization of piety, in general he tends to believe in a hierarchization of piety. He claims that not everybody can be subjected to the same messages

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<sup>387</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Eşrefoğlu Divanı*, (Istanbul: Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, 1972?), 209.

<sup>388</sup> “I am the Truth.” The phrase that has been uttered by several influential Sufis in the past. The phrase encapsulates the principle of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (the Unity of Being). This principle considers all beings as parts of one large being that is God. So, the Sufi’s quest is being aware of this fact and then simply to find ways to connect with the larger being.

about faith and piety.<sup>389</sup> In other words, the common people and the elite would be expected to follow different understandings of the Islamic faith and would be subjected to different standards with regards to piety. However, in this poem, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is stating that he is willing to reveal the secret of “*Enelhak*.” At the same time, he is stating that he wants to join the accursed.<sup>390</sup> He is stating that he does not want to hide it. These couplets communicate a strong willingness to open up, communicate, and disseminate a certain message (in this case the Sufi doctrine understood by the phrase *Enelhak*) which is embedded in the Sufi idea of divine love.

How do all of these ideas fit together? How can Eşrefoğlu Rumi, who is a strong believer in the hierarchies of spirituality utter couplets in which he is willing to disseminate the doctrine of *Enelhak*? Is Eşrefoğlu Rumi going further in this poem than he usually advocates in his other works, does it represent a feeling that is generally not openly expressed? Or is this poetry intended for a much more limited audience who are deemed to understand the sophisticated doctrine of Unity of Being?<sup>391</sup> Or does the authorship of this poem not belong to Eşrefoğlu Rumi and was somehow added to his divan later?

In this chapter, I aim to discuss Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s work *Müzekki’n-Nüfus* (The Purifier of Souls). By elaborating on the Sufi piety that was conceptualized in this work, I intend to demonstrate the ways in which Eşrefoğlu Rumi attempted to build “a piety for the people.” This

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<sup>389</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 38.

<sup>390</sup> This is a reference to the Malamatiyya sect and its doctrine. The followers of the Malamati doctrine are known to have deliberately kept a non-pious appearance in public in order to invoke the curse of others, while leading a pious Sufi life in private.

<sup>391</sup> What Eşrefoğlu Rumi considers to be *hass ul-havass*.

“popular” piety is embedded in his Sufi ideals. By discussing this work, I aim to also elaborate on Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s conceptualization of popular and “high” versions of Islamic piety. I would argue that even though he separated different levels of piety, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is attempting to build a popular (Sufi) piety that appeals to the masses but which also possess an “elite” version of the same Sufi piety.

### **3.2. *Müzekki’n-Nüfus* and Its Context**

With his work, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi aimed to promote his vision of piety among the Ottoman populace. He was attempting to reach to ordinary, Turkish-speaking Muslims living in the Ottoman realm. This group contained a substantial amount of recent converts to Islam. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Anatolia had been transitioning from a majority Christian to a majority Muslim population for several centuries.<sup>392</sup> In this environment, the dissemination of different Muslim pieties made for an audience that was curious about the Muslim faith. This curiosity led to a demand for works of informative nature that instruct their audience about the basics of the Islamic faith and Sufi piety. In this context, scholars such as Eşrefoğlu Rumi found an opportunity to disseminate their ideas. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi and his work *Müzekki’n-Nüfus* were successful in reaching an important segment of the Ottoman population.

In this period, several works were written in order to meet the same demand, that of educating the Anatolian Muslim population about the basics of Islamic faith. Works such as

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<sup>392</sup> Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, vii.



*Muhammediye* by Yazıcıoğlu Mehmed and *Envar ül-Aşikin* by his brother (Yazıcıoğlu) Ahmed Bican are both written in the style of instructive works intended to appeal for a popular Ottoman audience.<sup>393</sup> These works, just like *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, would reach an important degree of popularity in the Ottoman Empire in the following centuries. This popularity demonstrates the significant role that scholars and Sufi figures played in the making of an Ottoman Islam in Anatolia and the Balkans. These works have continued to play a significant role in the instruction of Islamic basics ever since.

#### **a. The Development of Vernacular Turkish**

Another important development of the era is the emergence of Turkish as the vernacular language in Anatolia. In the early Ottoman era, because of the relatively short history of the Anatolian Turkish language, there was a lack of works written in this language. One reason for this was the influential position of languages such as Arabic and Persian in the early pre-Ottoman and Ottoman cultural life. Scholars and Sufis had been writing in these languages for centuries, before many Turkish speakers had converted to Islam. In Anatolia, the establishment of the Turkish language as the language of Islamic high culture would take centuries. Meanwhile, many local Muslims had been relying on the oral transmission of ideas. The development of institutions of Islamic culture, such as madrasas and *khanqas* (dervish convents), aimed to serve to a flourishing local Muslim culture. The second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the proliferation of works written in Turkish, even though scholars continued to write many works of

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<sup>393</sup> Grenier, “The Yazıcıoğlu Brothers,” 37.

poetry and history as well as natural sciences in Persian and Arabic.<sup>394</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi actively participated in this process of proliferation.

In this context, Eşrefoğlu Rumi was presumably aware of the fact that his ideas could be disseminated more effectively if they were conveyed in vernacular Turkish as most rank-and-file Muslims did not understand Arabic and Persian. Like the Yazıcıoğlu brothers, he appears to have recognized the need to reach to the Turkish-speaking Ottoman populace in their own language. He achieved this by using a simple version of Anatolian Turkish. It is also possible to observe the use of this language in the *divan* that is attributed to him.<sup>395</sup> This work contains poems written in a simple form of Anatolian Turkish, not unlike the Sufi poetic tradition exemplified by the famous Sufi poet Yunus Emre in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, Eşrefoğlu Rumi articulates the need to write in this language in his work *Müzekki'n-Nüfus* and points to this need as his reason for choosing to write this work in Turkish.<sup>396</sup> He emphasizes his efforts to render the meaning of parts of the Quran and Hadith into “clear”<sup>397</sup> Turkish and incorporate them into *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, 26.

<sup>395</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Eşrefoğlu Divanı*, (Istanbul: Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, 1972?),

<sup>396</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2012), 68.

<sup>397</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 105. “...Açık Türki diline döndürdüm.”

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

## **b. A discussion of popular vs. high Islam**

Scholars have long debated about the expressions of popular piety in Islam and its relationship with an elite or a “high” version of Islam.<sup>399</sup> Is this binary approach of “elite” vs. “popular” conceptualizations of Islamic faith useful in the study of Islam? Is the expression and practice of Islam in among the ulama and shaykhs totally different from the experiences of “common people”? How can we understand if there is any discrepancy, when the sources are mostly created by the “elite”? How do Sufi expressions of Islamic faith fit into this binary approach of “high” vs. popular Islam?

It is difficult to find definitive answers to the questions raised above. Addressing the question of how scholars and Sufis expressed the differences between popular and non-popular versions of Islamic piety will improve the understanding of this subject. Eşrefoğlu Rumi was aware of a rift between popular and scholarly versions of Islam. Nevertheless, he constructed his binary approach by contrasting the piety of the Sufi shaykhs with the piety of the common people. In addition, he articulated his opinion about the differences between these two versions as well as some groups in between. He also tells stories of rulers, wealthy people that could be categorized as neither “the common people” nor as Sufi shaykhs. He identifies wealth and power as obstructions to leading an ideal pious lifestyle.

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<sup>399</sup> John Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment and Servanthood* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 2.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi conceptualizes an ideal version of Islamic piety that is strongly embedded in his Sufi ideals and shaped by the influential shaykhs like himself. He believes that the common populace could not attain that level of ideal Islamic piety. He contrasts the ideal piety of the Sufis with common people's degrees of religiosity. For Eşrefoğlu Rumi, this ideal piety could only be reached by the most rightful shaykhs at the pinnacle of the Sufi hierarchy. The other initiates of the Sufi path who did not reach the level of the shaykhs would still seen in a much higher spiritual level than the common people.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi expresses his belief in the limits of common people's understanding and ability to attain higher levels of piety. He utters seemingly contemptuous phrases like "the sins of the shaykhs are preferable to the good deeds of the common people." Based on these ideas, it could be that he considers the common people unable to reach higher levels of piety. In spite of such statements, Eşrefoğlu Rumi's works still indicate that the common people could be taught to be more pious. His project is to educate and familiarize the Anatolian and Balkan Turkish population to the ideals of Islamic (Sufi) piety. This may appear to be a contradictory stance since he attempts to popularize his beliefs among the Ottoman populace, which he considers sinful.<sup>400</sup> I believe that his project is complementary rather than contradictory. While he believes that the common people cannot be bearers of a truly high Islamic piety, he still aims to disseminate his version of piety among the wider Ottoman population. While seemingly dismissive of the general population, he aims to raise the levels of piety across the spectrum, from shaykh to commoner.

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<sup>400</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 38.

In *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses the basics of the Muslim creed. He indicates that the “creed of the common people” (*İman-ı avam*) entails the sincere belief in God, his angels, his holy scriptures, prophets, resurrection, heaven and hell, and good and evil within God’s discretion.<sup>401</sup> He considers this creed the minimum requirement for the common Muslims to follow. A higher second level is the “creed of the elite” (*İman-ı hass*). This creed includes everything in the “creed of the common people” but it also requires people to commit all of their deeds and prayers as if God is seeing, watching and knowing them.<sup>402</sup> The third and the highest level is “the creed of the elite of the elite” (*İman-ı ehassü'l-has*) What distinguishes this group is that God has manifested himself with one of his attributes into the soul of this group.<sup>403</sup> In addition, Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses the concept of *ihlas*.<sup>404</sup> Just like in the example of the Muslim creed, he uses a three-layered structure of piety in the conceptualization of *ihlas*. Eşrefoğlu Rumi cites Abu Uthman (Tr. Ebu Osman) who argues that there are three kinds of *ihlas*.<sup>405</sup> The first is the *ihlas* of *avam* (ihlas of the common people), the second is the *ihlas* of *hass* (ihlas of the elite), and the last one is the *ihlas* of *has al-hass* (ihlas of the elite of the elite).

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<sup>401</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 39.

<sup>402</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 40. “Allah’ı görür gibi ederler ve her ne kadar ol Allah’ı görmezse Allahu azimüşşan onu elbette görür. Ve havassın imanında sıdkı ve ibadetinde ve taatinde, zahirinde ve batınında ihlasları şöyle olur kim: Allahu zülcelali hazır ve nazır görürler ve Allah’ın azametini ve ululuğun şöyle fikrederler kim, gönüllerine Allah’tan gayrı dahi hiçbir şey gelmez ve Allah’ı zikrinden gayrı hiç nesne dilleri zikreylemez ve bir şeyle safaları olmaz.”

<sup>403</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 40. “... Hak Teala onların ruhuna sıfatlarından bir sıfatla tecelli eder ve ol tecelliye onlar dahi basiret gözüyle görürler ve ol tecelliye iman getirirler cemi eczalarıyla, yani eliyle, ayağıyla, gözüyle, kulağıyla, zahiriyle, batınıyla, hatta saçının ve sakalının ve gövdesinin bir kılıyla.”

<sup>404</sup> *Ihlas* is considered an Islamic virtue and means sincerity of belief and good deeds carried out with good intentions.

<sup>405</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 369.

As one can see in the examples above, Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests the existence of a three-layered structure of piety. This conceptualization demonstrates how Eşrefoğlu Rumi establishes an hierarchy of piety. This hierarchy divides the common people, the elite, and the “elite of the elite” into three separate groups. According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, these three groups are naturally different from each other. For this reason, they cannot be subjected to the same rules and expectations. Even something very basic in a religious tradition, such as its creed is not the same for different groups in a society.

However the hierarchy that Eşrefoğlu Rumi establishes is not set in stone. He argues that the *evliya* (saints) could loose their status if they stop acting in accordance with the principles of piety and engage in bad deeds.<sup>406</sup>

### **c. The need for Müzekki’n-Nüfus**

Providing Sufi ideas in vernacular Turkish is not the only reason why Eşrefoğlu Rumi wrote *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*. Eşrefoğlu Rumi presents moral reasoning to explain the need for *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*. One reason he provides is the decrease of trust for the *meşayih*<sup>407</sup> (shaykhs) in this particular age. For him, this is significant characteristic of the society in which he is

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<sup>406</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 537. “Ben dahi bu halk içinde keramet zahir edeyim, bana uysunlar demeyesin. Veya oğul kız hatırı için, veya dünyaya meyl ediben, bir iş ya keramet olsun diye tasarruf edeyim demeyesin, mertebenden düşersin Bel’am gibi ve Bersisa gibi merdud olursun.”

<sup>407</sup> *Meşayih* is the plural Turkicized plural of shaykh, i.e. the Sufi shaykhs.

living. This is because he sees this group, to which he belongs, as the key group responsible for disseminating piety and morality in an Islamic society.<sup>408</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi complains that the people in his day are following what their *nafs* (soul) demands rather than following the Sufi piety of the *meşayih*. He argues that the people that he is living amongst are far from following a pious lifestyle. He argues that he wrote this book in the Turkish language because he is hoping for the salvation<sup>409</sup> of the people.<sup>410</sup> In other words, the intended audience is the the Turkish-speaking Muslim population of Anatolia (as well as the Balkans), who were mostly unfamiliar with the established languages of Islamic civilization, Arabic and Persian, and who could be addressed in more simple Turkish as opposed to the high Ottoman language, full of Arabic and Persian vocabulary.

### **3.3. The Construction of Popular Piety in *Müzekki'n-Nüfus***

In his book *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is writing to a popular Ottoman audience. The audience encompasses a larger section of Ottoman society, especially compared to his work *Tarikatname*, which is addressed more specifically to Sufi disciples. Stories, poetry and explanative narratives play a role in the structure of this work. In other words, Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses poetry and prose, as well as fiction and non-fiction in the same work. Thus, he uses different forms of expression to articulate similar ideas.

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<sup>408</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 68.

<sup>409</sup> *Necat* is the word used for salvation, from the Arabic word “*najad*.”

<sup>410</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 68.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi also uses different techniques to communicate his Sufi ideals to this audience. Among these techniques are incorporating elements of mystery (*alamet*) into the text, expressing narratives of miracles and other wondrous deeds, providing examples addressed to the imagination of the audience, providing informative and explanatory narratives, and telling stories with embedded morals. These techniques occur frequently in *Müzekki'n-Nüfus* and contributed to its popularization.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses Islamic (and Biblical) history to present Islamic (and Abrahamic monotheistic) traditions as Sufi traditions. While doing this, he asserts that Abrahamic religion is not just compatible with the Sufi thought and tradition, but also makes the case for Sufism being the truest and purest representation of monotheistic religion. Eşrefoğlu Rumi presents Sufism as the highest level of Islamic spirituality, but also presents Sufism as the truest version of Islam itself. These two strains coexist in the works of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. I will argue that these techniques and accounts contributed to the popularization of Sufism as well as the incorporation of Sufism into the more general practice of Islam. In other words, the audience of these works would not necessarily differentiate between Sufi Islam and non-Sufi Islam, but rather would be more likely to understand Sufism as Islam.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses elements of mystery in order to appeal to a popular audience. Deeds that are mysterious, in other words, unknown or perceived as strange appeal to the curiosities of his audience. Eşrefoğlu Rumi bases this element of mystery on the Islamic idea that God is incomprehensible and unknowable. Because of this fact, things that God permits and



makes happen can be seen as mysterious and strange for human beings. Eşrefoğlu Rumi conveys the idea that his audience should accept the notion of mystery in their lives and in God's actions.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides narratives of several miracles and wondrous deeds in his work. *Müzekki'n-Nüfus* contains a significant number of references to and stories about prophets, saints, Sufi figures, and common people who perform or are being subjected to mysterious situations, miracles, and wondrous deeds. Miracles and wonders have played a significant role in the hagiographical narratives in many religious traditions.<sup>411</sup> Authors of hagiographic narratives have often incorporate accounts of wondrous deeds and miracles into their work in order to ascribe significant qualities to particular people.<sup>412</sup>

The tales of the wondrous deeds of Muslim saints are seen powerful instruments in the communication of religious ideas to a wide audience, who see these accounts as proof of the sainthood or accomplishment of these religious figures.<sup>413</sup> Even though *Müzekki'n-Nüfus* is not technically a hagiographic narrative, it employs some similar techniques to speak to the imaginations of pious Muslims and Sufi initiates. Especially wondrous deeds and miracles have been important parts of popular religion in different religious traditions. By incorporating these elements into his narrative, Eşrefoğlu Rumi increases the appeal of his work and message, and widens his audience.

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<sup>411</sup> Carl Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2011), 69.

<sup>412</sup> Renard, *Friends of God*, 8.

<sup>413</sup> Renard, *Friends of God*, 8, 270.; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Kültür Tarihi Kaynağı Menakıbnameler: Metodolojik Bir Yaklaşım* (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 2010), 3, 28-29.; Ernst, *Sufism*, 69.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi connects with an audience of people who are willing to learn about the basics of Islam and Sufism by appealing to their imaginations and curiosities. However, the descriptions of the Prophet, his companions, Biblical figures and their lives (even if they did not perform wonders and miracles), descriptions of heaven, hell, and apocalypse are all ways in which a popular audience can visualize and interpret religious principles. Like other monotheistic religions, Islam does not involve a visually specific divine figure and contains principles and ideas that are abstract and might not necessarily be obvious for ordinary believers. Accounts that appeal to the imaginations of the audience, preferably with didactic stories, can be an important tool in reaching a wider audience.

In one instance, Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses odor, especially unpleasant odors, as a tool to strengthen the feeling of disgust. He attributes unpleasant odors to the concepts that he finds disgusting. For instance, he suggests that those who slander others possess a supposed unpleasant odor.<sup>414</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that, just as tanners and others who do dirty work, those who slander others are not aware of the unpleasant smell that they possess. With the association of slander with an unpleasant smell, Eşrefoğlu Rumi strengthens his message about the undesirability and unpleasantness of the notion of slander. This example adds a familiar feature, such as that of a disgusting smell, to the abstract concept of slander. This association is also making this story relatable to a wider audience.

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<sup>414</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 325-6. "...mahşer halkı bunun ağzının çirkin kokusundan incineler, ..."

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is using storytelling to inform his audience. Stories are very powerful because of their simplicity and their ability to connect with a more popular audience.<sup>415</sup> The stories contribute to the dissemination of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's ideas by connecting them with the audience in a more personal way. These stories possess morals that the audience can identify with and understand easily.<sup>416</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses stories throughout his work in order to strengthen his non-fiction, informative narrative and convey his message in a more personal way. The heroes and villains in the stories function in ways that common people can associate or dissociate themselves with. Eşrefoğlu Rumi's goal is that the audience will take the message from the examples of those who they perceived to be heroic and emulate these examples in order to pursue a pious life.

### **3.4. Essential Concepts in *Müzekki'n-Nüfus***

In *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi employs different techniques in order to communicate a narrative for discussing his ideals of piety. He aims to directly disseminate his message among a popular audience.<sup>417</sup> To reach his goal, he explains basic concerns in Islamic faith as well as Sufi principles. At the same time, he encourages a pious Sufi lifestyle by detailing what is right and what is wrong for a pious life. Sometimes he uses a descriptive narrative to explain certain religious and Sufi concepts. At other times he introduces stories of

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<sup>415</sup> Ernst claims that wonder and amazement can be the purpose of a story and by way of wonder and amazement, the stories can influence the audience spiritually. Ernst, *Sufism*, 71.

<sup>416</sup> Cyrus Ali Zargar considers modeling virtue to be a main aspect of promoting ethical and virtual behavior in stories by Muslim authors. Cyrus Ali Zargar, *The Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism* (London: Oneworld Academic, 2017), 20-22.

<sup>417</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 68.

exemplary pious figures or stories of exemplary behavior with morals embedded in an idealized pious life style. Occasionally, he directly addresses his audience to warn about immoral behavior and encourages them to adopt a pious life. All these techniques play an important role in the dissemination of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's ideas.

#### **a. This world and the next**

The most important idea in the work *Müzekki'n-Nüfus* is the emphasis that Eşrefoğlu Rumi places on the concept of asceticism. Eşrefoğlu Rumi disdains the love for this world and worldly behavior. Many of the pious acts he describes and encourages in his work could be seen within the context of disdaining for this world and embracing the next. For this reason, the primary goal for him in this work is to shift the mentality of the audience from a worldly-life to an afterlife-focused approach.

In order to convince the audience to adopt an afterlife-focused approach, Eşrefoğlu Rumi narrates a story that presents the afterlife as the ultimate goal that one should aim for.<sup>418</sup> He describes the afterlife as the ultimate destination that one will eventually reach. He contrasts this image of the afterlife with this world, which he describes as a mere stop on the way to the ultimate destination.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 83.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

In the story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses the analogy of being at a stop on the pilgrimage journey to Mecca.<sup>420</sup> On their way to the pilgrimage, a group of pilgrims decide to stop in the city of Baghdad for the night. One person among the group decides to walk around the city and visit the taverns (*harabathane*). In his visit, he encounters a woman. He goes after the woman and claims that he loves her and wants to be with her. The woman argues that she would not give what he wants unless he gives all of his belongings and his capital to her. The man refuses. Instead, the woman convinces him to drink wine (*süci*) with her. The man agrees to drink wine with her and puts all of his belongings in front of her. Then, he drinks even more wine and they sleep together. The following day, the man wakes up and realizes that the woman he slept with was an ugly woman and all of his belongings are gone. He realizes that the group of pilgrims left the town and he is stuck there without any possessions and means.<sup>421</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses this story to make the case that one who lives one's life while focusing on this world and not on the afterlife may face a situation like the man in the story. In other words, if one lives one's life focusing on this world and does nothing for the next, one will realize that one will miss one's chance and one will realize that one did nothing to position oneself to reach one's ultimate goal. By comparing life to a stop in a journey, Eşrefoğlu Rumi aims to remind the audience about the afterlife and prepare for it. He uses the story of this man to deter his audience from forgetting the ultimate goal. After he tells the story and the moral of the story, he encourages the audience to abandon its focus on the worldly realm.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 83.

<sup>421</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 84.

<sup>422</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 85. "Dünya seni terketmeden sen dünyayı terkedesin."

Eşrefoğlu Rumi reminds the audience that the great prophets were also rulers were in charge of the administration of many lands. They had been given political authority by God. However, Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that despite these prophets possessing political power, they were ascetics, and used their power within the principles of asceticism and disdained material wealth and political power.<sup>423</sup>

*“The prophets had actually owned worldly power, but they did not accept it, they did not approve it, they did not live in bounty. Whatever God gave them, they gave it in the name of God, they ate barley bread and wore a woolen (dervish) cloak.”*<sup>424</sup>

By establishing connections between the prophets and Sufi ritual and practice, Eşrefoğlu Rumi once again attempts to position his Sufi piety at the central stage of the Muslim doctrine and piety. The reality that Muhammad and many other prophets in the Islamic tradition are political leaders, represents a challenge for Eşrefoğlu Rumi. This challenge originates from his dichotomization of ideal pious behavior and any practice that deals with worldly things, which includes political leadership. Eşrefoğlu Rumi attempts to overcome this challenge by disassociating the prophets from worldliness and by representing them as unwilling rulers who are true ascetics at heart.

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<sup>423</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 92.

<sup>424</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 92. “Peygamberler gerçi çok dünyaya malik oldular, amma kabul etmediler, saklayıp gönül vermediler, tena’um eylemediler. Nice kim Allahu Teala onlara verdiyse, onlar dahi Allah yoluna verirlerdi, kendiler arpa ekmeğin yerlerdi ve aba giyerlerdi.”

In a hadith, the prophet shows his companion Ebu Hureyre (Ar. Abu Hurayra) a creek.<sup>425</sup> He points out many dead bodies lying in the creek to Ebu Hureyre (Ar. Abu Hurayra). The prophet suggests that all these people were once very powerful, influential, and had comfortable lives. However, all of them are now in a condition that people feel disgust towards. In this story, the prophet (and Eşrefoğlu Rumi) makes the point that life is temporary and one should live life anticipating the end. In addition, the Prophet suggests that Ebu Hureyre (i.e. the audience) should take a lesson from the plight of these dead bodies.<sup>426</sup>

In a different example, Eşrefoğlu Rumi cites Jesus who suggests that this world is a bridge on the way to the next world.<sup>427</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi explains that different people have crossed this bridge at different speeds. However, at the end everybody must cross it. He argues that no matter how powerful one is, one has to cross it at the end. He suggests that many people did not realize this fact and they had built mansions on this bridge, and none of those have survived.<sup>428</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi is using this example to implore his followers not to invest in the material possessions of this world, and rather focus on the next one.

In a different example, Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses the analogy of a dream to explain this world (life).<sup>429</sup> He suggests that life in this world can be compared to a person who sees a dream. In his dream, this person sees that he becomes a king. He possesses all— an entourage, power, and

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<sup>425</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 94.

<sup>426</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 95.

<sup>427</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 99.

<sup>428</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 99.

<sup>429</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 96.

luxuries. However, this person is not a real king because this is just a dream. Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that the person living in this world is just like the person who is king in his dream. He is in a temporary illusion, rather than in a permanent reality. By using this example, Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that the person should act with the understanding that this situation (life) is illusionary and temporary, and the permanent reality (the afterlife) should be his guidance.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi dichotomizes earthly versus ascetic lifestyles, trying to persuade his audience to choose the latter option. He characterizes the earthly realm and earthly possessions as inconsistent with a pious Sufi life and demands a rejection of these concepts by pious believers.<sup>430</sup> Only by adopting an ascetic lifestyle, thus through a struggle with his or her earthly instincts, can people attain a more spiritual lifestyle.<sup>431</sup> In addition, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is advising people to give their material possessions to the poor.<sup>432</sup> He associates richness and material possessions with a mentality that favors this world, and advises the people rather to donate to those who are in need. Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that material possessions make people forget about their eternal destiny in the afterlife.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 41-2.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid. “‘Kim Hakk’a kavuşmayı, O’nunla görüşmeyi dilerse, salih ameller işlesin, ancak bu tür ameller Rab’la görüşmeyi sağlar.’ dediği buna işarettir.”

<sup>432</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 100.

<sup>433</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 103.



## b. Seclusion

One of the key features of the ascetic lifestyle is the emphasis on the distinction between the pious ascetics<sup>434</sup> and the common people. Eşrefoğlu Rumi cites a Hadith which says “the rejection of the (common) people is the acceptance of God.”<sup>435</sup> This claim originates from the understanding that the common people are considered sinful in general, and certainly more sinful than the small pious ascetic minority.<sup>436</sup> The ascetic lifestyle, in its pure form, can be reached outside of the popular realm. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a discussion of the Sufi conceptualization of seclusion.<sup>437</sup> He praises the abandonment of society or seclusion in order to have a better mechanism to adopt a more pious and ascetic lifestyle. Since adopting an ascetic lifestyle is seen as an easier goal to achieve while away from the popular masses, and thus away from the considerations of the norms of society, seclusion becomes an important Sufi ideal.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi supports the Sufi ideal of seclusion with several examples from the Quran, Hadith, and the examples of prominent Sufi leaders.<sup>438</sup> He suggests that many saints have agreed upon the idea that one should escape from the common people to live a pious life.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> i.e. the Sufis or the meşayih

<sup>435</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 540. “Redd-i halk kabul-i Hak'tır.”

<sup>436</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Tarikatname*, 38.

<sup>437</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 353-80.

<sup>438</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 355-357.

<sup>439</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 355.

*“Listen, many saints have agreed, have left the common folk, some went to the mountains, some sat in caves, all gave themselves to prayer and advised their disciples to escape from the common folk as one escapes from a lion.”<sup>440</sup>*

He cites the example of a prominent Sufi figure Şeyh Süleyman-ı Darani.<sup>441</sup> According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, this Sufi shaykh recommended that his disciples escape society as if escaping from a lion.<sup>442</sup> In the same section, Eşrefoğlu Rumi cites a saying of Şeyh Süfyan-ı Sevri<sup>443</sup> and Imam Gazali, who argue that it is a necessary duty to leave society and worldly life in current times.<sup>444</sup> After citing these examples, Eşrefoğlu Rumi indicates that in his time, it is again necessary to do the same.<sup>445</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that one cannot achieve Sufi and ascetic goals within the structure of everyday life. He provides the reasoning that society’s mainstream norms and the ascetic Sufi lifestyle he is preaching are incompatible with each other. He explains this situation from the perspective of a potential initiate in the Sufi path. He states that it is hard for one to resist

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<sup>440</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 355. “İşittin, nice azizler ittifak ettiler, bu halk arasından çıktılar, kimi dağlar başında, kimi mağarada oturdular, ibadete taate meşgul oldur ve kendilere mürit olan yaranlara vasiyet ettiler kim halktan kaçalar şol arslandan kaçır gibi.”

<sup>441</sup> Şeyh Süleyman-ı Darani (d.830) was born in the village of Daran near Damascus. He was among the early Sufis of the region and adopted many ascetic (*zühd*) practices. Mustafa Kara, “Dârânî,” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/darani>.

<sup>442</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 355. Kaçın halktan siz, şol arslandan kaçtığınız gibi.

<sup>443</sup> Süfyan Sevri (Turkish) or Süfyan al-Thawri (d.778) was an Islamic scholar from Kufa in Mesopotamia. He is known to be the founder of the Thawriyya school of law and transmitted many Hadiths. Recep Özdirek and Ali Hakan Çavuşoğlu, “Süfyan es-Sevrî,” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sufyan-es-sevri#1>.; Susan A. Spector, “Sufyan al-Thawri,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Vol. IX, ed. C.E. Bosworth, E. Van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs and G. Lecomte (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 770-772.

<sup>444</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 355. “Bu şimdiki zamanda uzlet farzdır.”

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

conforming to mainstream social norms.<sup>446</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that once one joins mainstream society, one cannot oppose the (common) people. He argues that if the person opposes the norms of society, the people will treat this person as their enemy.<sup>447</sup>

*“If you oppose these, they will mock you, they will hurt you, you do not have the means to tolerate their troubles, do not get inflamed, they will make this world a terrible place for you, they will destroy your pleasure, they will make themselves your enemy. And you can not be patient, and you would curse them, and would rebel against God.”*<sup>448</sup>

It is obvious from the example above that, according to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, being close to the common people will ultimately corrupt the potential Sufi initiate and cause him or her to sin and oppose the divine will. For this reason, he suggests that Sufis avoid mingling with the common people as much as possible.

While Eşrefoğlu Rumi sets his ideal piety outside of the realm of the everyday life he also states that there are certain exceptions to this rule. He cites these exceptions as the deeds that have to be performed within the public realm.<sup>449</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi even goes further and claims that it is necessary to include the public realm in the performance of these actions. Among these

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<sup>446</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 355.

<sup>447</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 355-6.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid. “Eğer bunlara muhalefet edersen, sana nükteler ederler, seni incitirler senin ol denli malın yoktur ki bunların zahmetine tahamül edersen, azmayasın, yoksa sana bugün dünyayı dar ederler, safanı giderirler, kendileri sana düşman ederler. Sen dahi naghah sabredemeyip bu halka kıyas beddua edesin, Allahu Teala'ya asi olasın.”

<sup>449</sup> These exceptions were seen as part of the Islamic tradition. Erik Ohlander, “Early Sufi Rituals, Beliefs, and Hermeneutics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 71.

deeds are the five daily prayers with the public, giving *zekat* (alms), performance of the Hajj, celebrating the *bayram*<sup>450</sup> with the public, and fasting in the month of Ramadan.<sup>451</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi supports his point by quoting Şeyh Sülyeman-ı Darani, who makes a case for pious seclusion. Darani provides three exceptions to his argument. These three exceptions are three kinds of prayer that Muslims should perform with the public: Friday, bayram and funeral prayers.<sup>452</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi includes Darani's recommendations in his own teachings.<sup>453</sup> He advises the Sufis to dress and prepare themselves in such a way that the people cannot tell that they are ascetics.<sup>454</sup>

*“Oh saintly brother, if you want to join the people, it is necessary that you take good care of yourself, comb your hair and your beard and nicely arrange your muslin hide your asceticism from the people, in such a way that when the people see you they cannot tell that you are an ascetic.”*<sup>455</sup>

In a different example, Eşrefoğlu Rumi gives the example of Muhammad. In this example, he suggests that the Prophet went into seclusion on the mountain of Hira,<sup>456</sup> where he

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<sup>450</sup> Eid, Islamic festivals

<sup>451</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 361.

<sup>452</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 355. “Karışın bu halka birkaç yerde Namaz kılınca cuma namazında ve bayram namazında namaz kılınca ve bir dahi cenaze namazında namaz kılınca.”

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 371.

<sup>455</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 371. “Ey aziz karındaş, kaçan bu halka karışmak istesen gerektir kim, yüzünü gözünü hoşça edesin, saçın ve sakalın tarayasın ve tülbetini gökçek düzesin ol riyazetin halktan gizleyesin, ta kim bu halk seni görünce bilmeyeler ehl-i riyazet olduğunu.”

<sup>456</sup> Hira mountain is where Muslims believe that Muhammad received his first revelation from God by the Angel Gabriel. People who favored the Sufi practice of seclusion and defended it as a legitimate Islamic practice used this example. Ernst, *Sufism*, 100.

frequently ate barley bread. After citing this example, he adds that he has added this example so that the reader can understand that the way of the Prophet and the way of the Sufi are alike.<sup>457</sup> Here, Eşrefoğlu Rumi once more attempts to make the case that his understanding of the Sufi path is the “true” and “real” interpretation of Islam.

Even though Eşrefoğlu Rumi portrays seclusion and ascetic life as a virtue, he also states that not all types of seclusion have to be treated equally. He explains that there are two kinds of seclusion. One may go into seclusion for pious reasons while others may go into seclusion for evil reasons.<sup>458</sup> The seclusion that is conducted for “pious reasons” is related to the ascetic lifestyle. It involves the practices of taming the *nafs*, and enduring hunger and thirst. The seclusion that is conducted for “evil reasons” involves the intention to be comfortable, and to be safe from the evils of society without any trouble from the people.<sup>459</sup> According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, the difference between the two kinds of seclusion is that the divine one is conducted for God’s sake and the evil one is conducted for personal reasons. In other words, the intention seems to be more important than the outcome of the practice of seclusion.

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<sup>457</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 524-5. “Ve bu kıssayı evvelinden sana aslıyla diyeyim, hem Resul evvel emirde mücahedeler ettikten sonra bazısını sana diyeyim, ta sen dahi bilesin kim, bu sufilerin yolu peygamber yolu olduğun.”

<sup>458</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 357-8. “Amma bu uzlet kim vardır, iki nev’idir. Biri şeytanidir ve biri rahmanidir.”

<sup>459</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 358. “Ve bir kısım dahi Rahmani uzlet budur ki; haltan kesilmekten kastın ve niyetin bu olmak ola: Varasın, nefsin itini bu halkın içinden alasın, gidesin bir halvet yere bağlayasın açlığa, susuzluğa ol nefsi-i şumun ciğerini dağılasın.

Ve bir dahi şeytani uzlet budur ki: Halktan kesilesin, varasın bir halvet yerde oturasın, rahat olayım ve bu halkın şerrinden emin olayım; bunların işi fitne ve fesat oldu, bunların ucundan benim vaktim mükedder oldu. Pes niyetin böyle olunca, bu halkın mecmunu şer üzre görmüş olursun, uzletin şeytani olur.”

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is making the argument that for shaykhs and Sufi figures, fame and relationships with the common people can be damaging.<sup>460</sup> This is why he is making a case for seclusion and ascetic lifestyle.<sup>461</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that power and prestige of shaykhs will lead to arrogance and hypocrisy, which will damage the Sufis.<sup>462</sup>

*“In the beginning of the book, we said that the core of the many bad deeds is love for this world. Now what eliminates the (divine/spiritual) benefit of one’s good deed is hypocrisy. What is leading to hypocrisy is this world, and loving the world, and arrogance, and loving the fame, dignity, and reverence for this world.”<sup>463</sup>*

This statement indicates that the shaykhs and Sufi institutions were considered powerful and prestigious by an important segment of the population. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is advising the Sufis to commit to good deeds for God’s sake, and not for fame or other worldly reasons. He is suggesting that the Sufis should not deliberately join social life and seek the attention of the people. Instead, he advises the Sufis to hide their identities and deeds from the people, and refrain from people’s attention. He argues that if God choses to reveal their identities, then this is God’s decision which cannot be questioned.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 360.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid. “‘Kişi kendi bu halkın izzetinden, hürmetinden ve şöhetinden geçirip horluğa ve alçaklığa bırakmayınca ihlas ele girmez’ dedi. ‘Ve bu halktan tamam kesilmeyince, bunlar ele girmez’ dedi. ‘Yoksa bu halka karışmak ve bu halkın şöhetin ve hürmetin gözetmek kişiye riya getirir’ dedi.”

<sup>462</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 360.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid. “Nitekim yukarıda cemi şerrin başı dünya sevmektir dedik idi kitabın evvelinde. İmdi kişinin amelini hiç edip, ahirete mağbun eden riyadır. Amma bu riyaya dahi sebep dünyadır ve dünyayı sevmektir ve kibirdir ve dünyanın şöhetin ve izzetin ve hürmetin sevmektir.”

<sup>464</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 360. “‘Siz kendinizi ve amelinizi halktan gizleyin ve Hak sizi ihtiyarsız aşikare ederse, ol dilek Hakk’ındır, andan size nesne yoktur’ dedi.”

### c. Intention

Just like in the example above, Eşrefoğlu Rumi places strong emphasis on performing a deed for God's sake, rather than personal favors. He denounces people, especially the Sufis and the pious, who are arrogant because of their fame among the people, or who are doing deeds because it will bring them fame or prestige. He even claims that on the day of the apocalypse, these people will be sent to hell.<sup>465</sup>

*“You said ‘we are the ummah of Muhammad on earth,’ and swore at us as infidels; some of you said ‘we are Sufis,’ you prayed in mosques, you were walking with your turbans?, you did not like anybody, in the mosques, in the zikr ceremonies you shook your head, some of you were whirling, some froze?, some skewered yourselves, walked on the lovers (Sufi) path. We used to see you and said how happy these are, they will end up on heaven.”<sup>466</sup>*

In the section above, Eşrefoğlu Rumi narrates the situation of some Sufis from the position of infidels. In this account, he is describing some instances of Sufis performing deeds associated with Sufi piety, such as praying, whirling, wearing turbans, shaking heads, and skewering. The narrators, based on these deeds and the pious reputation of these Sufis see them as saints deserving a place on heaven. However, from the story we understand that these Sufis

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<sup>465</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 367. “Dünya izzetine aldandın, ahiret hüsrânına razı oldun...”

<sup>466</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 366. “Siz dünyada Muhammed ümmetiyiz derdiniz, bize kafir diye söverdiniz; kiminiz sufîyiz derdiniz, mescitlerde namaz kıldınız, taylasan sarkıtıp gezerdiniz, kimseyi beğenmezsiniz; mescitlerde zikir meclisinde haykırıp başınız sallardınız, kiminiz dönerdiniz, kiminiz donardınız, kiminiz kendinizi şişlerdiniz, uşşak davasın ederdiniz. Biz sizi görürdük, ne mutlu şunların canına derdik, uçmaklıktır şunlar derdik.”

did not end up in heaven as it had been expected for them. In the section below they provide an explanation about why they did not end up on heaven.

*“How could we know? On Earth, we used to pray, we liked that the people said good about us. This led them to say even more good things about us, this was hypocrisy. To pray in order to be called a good person is polytheism. Prayer is only supposed to be for God’s sake. We did not know, we are called polytheists, hypocrites, they brought us to hell.”<sup>467</sup>*

As we can see from this explanation, the Sufis confessed that on Earth, they enjoyed being called good people. This led them to pray and perform pious deeds for the sake of worldly praise. When they were brought to hell, they realized that what they had been doing was not right. In this example, Eşrefoğlu Rumi emphasizes that the image of piety is not itself important and it can even be damaging for some people. Just like the other stories Eşrefoğlu Rumi narrates, it offers a moral for the reader to learn from this example.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi asserts that a Sufi shaykh who looks like an ascetic will be treated like one by the people. The people will treat an ascetic person like a saint.<sup>468</sup> Just like the discussion above, this situation might lead the Sufi to enjoy the people’s treatment. According to Eşrefoğlu

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<sup>467</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 366. “Ne bilelim? Dünyada gerçi kim biz ibadetler, taatler, ederdik, şol halkın hoş müslüman kişi olur, bu halkın bizi hoşlukla andıkları bize hoş gelirdi. Bunun anmağı ve anılmağı arttırırdı ve bizim adımız söylendikçe, biz halktan yana meylimiz ziyade beter olurduk, meğer ol riya imiş. Bu halk bize iyi kişidir desinler diye ibadet etmek, sufilenmek müşriklik imiş. Pes ibadet, taat sırf Hak için gerekmiş. Bilmeyiz kim şimdi bize mürai, müşrik dediler, bizi mağbun, mahrum bunda cehenneme getirdiler.”

<sup>468</sup> The Islamic tradition has treated the ascetics or people who defy conventional norms of society as holy people or saints. Ernst, *Sufism*, 115.



Rumi, their popularity will lead the person to lose their morals. He argues that the Sufi who enjoys popular interest, will commit deeds to prolong his popularity and this will lead him to act for non-divine purposes.<sup>469</sup>

At the same time, Eşrefoğlu Rumi advises them not to be close to the people and mingle in their discussions. In addition, Eşrefoğlu Rumi recommends that Sufis should hide their true intentions from the people. He is worried that the Sufis would not be able to stay true to their intentions if they stayed among the ordinary people and warns them to keep their intentions for God only.

#### **d. Nafs**

The key concept in the discussions about the ideal ascetic lifestyle is the concept of *nafs*.<sup>470</sup> *Nafs* can be translated as self or soul, but mostly refers to the earthly instincts of human beings. In Sufi traditions, embracing an ideal Sufi lifestyle entails an individual's ability to control and tame his or her own *nafs*.<sup>471</sup> The Sufi path usually involves different rituals and practices for Sufi initiates to tame their *nafs*. Once the initiates demonstrate enough success in controlling their *nafs*, they are promoted to the next Sufi level. They were allowed to continue on their Sufi path, as long as they demonstrated progress. They might be expected to continue to

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<sup>469</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 370.

<sup>470</sup> *Nafs* in Arabic, *nefs* in Turkish.

<sup>471</sup> Renard, *Friends of God*, 50.

further tame their *nafs* in a more successful way as they continue moving through the spiritual steps of the Sufi path's hierarchy.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides conceptualizations of the idea of *nafs* by providing a hierarchy of different spiritual levels of *nafs*. In the beginning of his book *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*<sup>472</sup>, he argues that human beings possess four levels of *nafs*.<sup>473</sup> He suggests that the first is the commanding *nafs* (*nefs-i emmare*), the second is the reprimanding *nafs* (*nefs-i levvame*), the third is the inspiring *nafs* (*nefs-i mülhimme*), and the fourth one is the peaceful *nafs* (*nefs-i mutmainne*). Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that, with the help of providence, the shaykhs could gradually move from the first level to the fourth level of *nafs*.<sup>474</sup> By moving gradually from the first to the fourth level, the Sufi will also move up within the spiritual hierarchy. This upward movement constitutes the journey of the Sufi on the Sufi path, where he or she is approaching the eventual goal of mystical union with God. In many Sufi traditions, this goal requires the taming of one's *nafs*.

The action of taming the *nafs* can be explained by projecting self-control over the person's mind and body. Eşrefoğlu Rumi considers taming hunger a very fundamental part of taming the *nafs*.<sup>475</sup> He suggests that the natural instincts of the *nafs* manifest themselves differently in different parts of the body. He explains that the stomach, the tongue, the hand, the

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<sup>472</sup> The word *Nüfus* is the plural of *nafs* (soul). The title of the book means the Purifier of the Souls.

<sup>473</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 35.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid. "Amma meşayihe Hak Teala Hazreti kereminden şol kadar ilim ve şol kadar kudret vermiştir ki, kendi nefislerin perhiz ve enva-ı riyazetle zabtederler; emmarelikten levvamelige ve mülhimeliğe ve mutmainneliğe döndürürler; ta kim 'İrci'i' hitabına muhatap olmaklığı kesb ede."

<sup>475</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 294.

foot, the eye, the nose, the ear, and the genitals, all have desires regarding their own senses.<sup>476</sup>

They should all be tamed in order to reach the general goal of taming of the *nafs*, which would mean that the desires of the body will be under the control of the person. The taming of the *nafs* will eventually lead the person to prayer and ascetic life.<sup>477</sup>

### e. Hunger

One of the most obvious ways in which the *nafs* is believed to manifest itself is when the human body feels hunger. Eşrefoğlu Rumi associates hunger with the desires of other organs. He claims that by taming hunger, the Sufi will be in a good position to tame these other desires that are connected with the *nafs*.<sup>478</sup>

In order to emphasize his point about the significance of hunger in a person's journey toward self-control or taming the *nafs*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi tells a story. In this story, God creates the *nafs*.<sup>479</sup> Afterwards, he ask *nafs* the question: "Who am I and who are you?"<sup>480</sup> The *nafs* answers "You are you and I am me." After this, God creates hell. He positions the *nafs* inside hell and it stays inside for one thousand years. After this period, the angels take the *nafs* out of

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<sup>476</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 294.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid. "İmdi gönül kararıp ibadetten ve taatten lezzet almayıp zevk etmediği çok yemektendir. Ol vakit kim boğazdan mideye taam az yene, bu azaya dahi şehvet az bahş olur. Bir uğurdan suyun ve yemeğin kesicek, hod şehvet bu azadan bir uğurdan kesilir gider. Ol vakit kuvaya zafiyet gelir; dil doğru söylemek diler, haram hod kanda kaldı... El dahi helale yapışmak dilemez, haram kanda kaldı... Göz dahi helale bakmadan zevk etmez, haram kanda kaldı... Ferc dahi helalden zevk almaz olur, haram kanda kaldı..."

<sup>478</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 294.

<sup>479</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 299.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid. "'Ey nefis, bildin mi hiç ben kimim ve sen kimsin?' Andan nefis Hak Teala hazretine cevap verip eyitti: 'Sen sensin ve ben benim' dedi."

hell and God asks the *nafs* the same question. The *nafs* answers and still does not accept God as its lord. Following this, God commands that the *nafs*' food should be cut.<sup>481</sup> After three days, the *nafs* begs to see God. The angels let the *nafs* meet with God again. In this meeting, the *nafs* acknowledges God as its lord.<sup>482</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that the *nafs* has a very strong natural instinct which is resilient and resistant to many harsh situations. The moral of the story is that hunger is the only effective strategy to tame the *nafs*, and thus to be a true ascetic.<sup>483</sup>

This story communicates the message that hunger is the most important tool to be used in order to tame one's *nafs*, which would lead to a more pious life. Stories like this one serve an important purpose in Eşrefoğlu Rumi's account. They contribute to the demystifying of complicated concepts, such as *nafs*, by presenting it with human features and with a human voice.<sup>484</sup> The concept of *nafs* is at the center of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's account as well as several Sufi practices. Explaining it in a way that many people can relate to themselves and narrating it in the genre of popular stories is a powerful tool that allows Eşrefoğlu Rumi to disseminate these Sufi ideals to a popular audience.

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<sup>481</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 300. "Varın o nefis-i emmarenin gıdasını kesin!"

<sup>482</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 301. "'Ya nefis, beni bildin mi Ben kimim ve sen kimsin?' Nefis eyitti:

'Bildim ya Rabbi! Sen benim Mevlamsın ve ben senin zayıf kulunum!'"

<sup>483</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 299-301.

<sup>484</sup> For a similar human rendering of *nafs*: Renard, *Friends of God*, 60.

After making the case for hunger being crucial in taming the *nafs* and providing self-control, Eşrefoğlu Rumi goes further and claims that hunger or eating little will make the human being better in many different ways.<sup>485</sup>

*“And eating less of this food, will make the heart pure and the forces of the soul and physical darknesses will leave the heart and the mind will be sound and the eye of the heart (spiritual force) will open. Less-eating people’s faces are covered with divine light and their hearts are soft, which means they are generous. And less-eating people will have good tastes from prayer, invocation, rosary, prayer and fasting, will derive pleasure from all divine deeds and avoid superstition and will subjugate their souls to their will rather than being themselves subjugated to the soul.”*<sup>486</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi cites receiving God’s blessing and divine light (*nur*), a stronger mind, wisdom, blessing language, a humble character, and better devotion to worship among the qualities available to ones who eat little and tame their hunger.<sup>487</sup> At the same time those who can tame their hunger will also be avoiding superstitions and arrogance, will not forget the

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<sup>485</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 301.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid. Ve dahi bu yemeği az yemek, gönlü safi eder ve küdürat-ı nefسانیye ve zulemat-ı cismaniye gönlünden gider ve zihin kuvvetli olur ve gönül gözü açılır. Az yiyen kişilerin yüzü nurlu olur ve gönlü yumuşak olur ve gönlü yumuşak olanın eli açık olur.

Ve dahi bu az yiyen kişinin ibadetinin, taatinin lezzeti olur; zikirden, tesbihten, namazdan, oruçtan, her hakkani işlerden safası olur ve her batıldan sakınır olur ve nefsi kendi dileğine uydurur ve kendi nefsine uymaz olur.

<sup>487</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 302.

inevitability of death, and will regret their sins.<sup>488</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi associates piety with eating little and associates eating a lot with unbelief.<sup>489</sup>

## **f. Language**

Language or tongue is the next concept that Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a discussion about. He believes that a person, especially a Sufi, should be careful with his “tongue.” The Sufi should always pay attention to the language that he or she speaks. Being careful about what you say is seen as virtue. The tongue is seen exactly like the stomach,<sup>490</sup> as an organ which will have excessive desires if it is not checked or tamed. In addition, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is making the case for speaking less in general as a virtue.<sup>491</sup> He compares speaking less to eating less. Just as with the example of eating less, speaking less is also something he approves.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi argues that speaking a lot and eating a lot will cause trouble for the person involved in these practices.<sup>492</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi cites a Hadith which claims that using the language the right way is a prerequisite for possessing the right belief.<sup>493</sup> He also cites another Hadith which warns the audience that being careful about the language and using it for good

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<sup>488</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 302.

<sup>489</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 303.

<sup>490</sup> Representing *nafs* in general.

<sup>491</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 309.

<sup>492</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, p.307.

<sup>493</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, p.308. : “... hiç bir kimsenin imanı doğru olmaz, dili doğru olmayınca.”

purposes are the most important deeds to place the person in paradise, after feeding the poor and hungry.<sup>494</sup>

Another point, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is making in the context of tongue, is the idea of intent. According to him, from a divine point of view, the intent of a deed is as important as the deed itself. He takes the stance that doing a good deed for “the wrong reason” will not led to the same reward as a deed that is performed for the right reason.

*“When you praise a village folk, exaggerate it, say that they are rightful and generous; they like these words, either you say in person or to be told to them by others. Either these words describe them or not, you say it will praise this person, but you do not reflect on the fact that if these words do not describe the person, you will be a liar, and will be recorded as such.”<sup>495</sup>*

As one can see in the example above, Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that just because someone is saying something nice or doing something good, it does not necessarily mean that it is a good

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<sup>494</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 308. “Bir gün bir Arap geldi, Resul hazretine eyitti:

‘Ya Resulullah, bana bir amel haber ver ki, onunla cennete gireyim!’ dedi.

Resul ol pür-usul eyitti:

‘Var, açları doyur ve susuz kandır, muhtaçların elin tut, Hak Teala’nın kullarına hayırlı yola kılavuz ol’ dedi.

Arap eyitti:

‘Ya Resulullah, bunlar benim elimden gelmez kim edeydim’ der.

Resul aleyhisselam döndü yine ol Arab’a buyurdu:

‘Var dilin üzerine malik ol yani var dilini sakla, ne olursa söyleme. Eğer söylersen sözün hayırlısın söyle’ der.”

<sup>495</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 311. “Kaçan bir köy halkını methetmek, mübalağa edersen, salihdir ve cömerttir dersin; şol sözler kim ona hoş gelir, yüzüne karşı dersin veyahut zem veya gıybetin dersin, ona desinler diye. Gerekse ol söylediği sözler olsun, ol kişide olsun, gerekse olmasın, ol kişiye hoş gelsin dersin, amma şunu fikretmezsın kim, ol söylediğin sözler ol kişide yoksa, yalancı olursun, yalancılar defetine yazılırsın.”

deed (from the Islamic/divine perspective). He suggests that if it is done for fame or out of hypocrisy, it is not considered a good deed, even if the outcome is good.<sup>496</sup> Thus, for Eşrefoğlu Rumi, a person's intention when performing a deed or speaking is very significant, to the degree that he or she will not benefit from a good deed if it is not performed for the right reason.

However, the significance of the intention does not make it a good deed no matter what. Another example Eşrefoğlu Rumi gives about this issue that is if one says something nice about someone and in order to praise someone exaggerates the reality and says something that misrepresents that person, this might as well be a lie, and will be treated as such. From this example, one gets the idea that intention is very important when one is performing a deed. If the deed is a wrong one, like in the example of lying, even if one has a good intention doing it, God will not consider it a righteous action.<sup>497</sup>

### **g. Sleep**

According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, sleep is another symptom of human body's desire.<sup>498</sup> In other words, sleep is seen as the articulation of desire by the person's *nafs*. He recommends people to avoid a long sleep and praises the virtues of sleeping little.<sup>499</sup> The place of nightly ritual prayer<sup>500</sup> in Islam becomes another layer in Eşrefoğlu Rumi's argument about skipping the

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<sup>496</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 310.

<sup>497</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 311.

<sup>498</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 335-6.

<sup>499</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 335.

<sup>500</sup> *Namaz* in Turkish. Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 339. "Ey Resulüm, sana mahssu fazla bir namaz olarak, gece uykudan kalk da, Kur'an ile gece namazı kıl"



full night time sleep. Nightly prayers of vigils are part of Islamic and Sufi spirituality.<sup>501</sup> He encourages his audience to wake up at midnight and perform ablutions and ritual prayer.<sup>502</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi encourages his audience not to sleep until the morning and spend some of the night with Sufi rituals or prayer. He identifies sleeping until the morning as something that the pious Muslims should be discouraged from doing.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi also identifies having bad dreams as a symptom of sleeping a lot.<sup>503</sup> According to him, one can avoid having bad dreams if one does not sleep a lot and avoids sleeping the whole night. He claims that the devil will enter the body when one is asleep. In addition, the devil will work his ways into tricking the pious Muslims in their sleep.<sup>504</sup> For this reason, pious behavior, in his opinion, entails spending some of the night in prayer and contemplation of the divine.

Just like sleep itself, the night also plays a central role in Eşrefoğlu Rumi's conceptualization of piety.<sup>505</sup> He suggests that different groups await the night for different reasons.<sup>506</sup> He suggests that many Sufis wait for the night to find some special time to be alone with God and in order to spend their time in prayer and remembrance of the divine. In contrast

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<sup>501</sup> Christian Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3.

<sup>502</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 336. "Zira gecelerde abdest alıp iki rekat namaz kılmak, dünyadan ve dünyaya malik olmaktan yeğdir."

<sup>503</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 340.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid. "Bu uyku kim vardır sabahla, şeytanidir. Şeytan burnu deliğinden içeri girmekle ve şer düşler göstermeğe sebeptir kim, onu kimseye demek olmaz."

<sup>505</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 343.

<sup>506</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 341. "Ey aziz, geceleri sa'yin olsun, uyanıklık ile geçiresin geceni. Zira bu geceler halkı üç bölük taifedir. Bu üç taifenin üzerinde üç halle geçer, kafir eğer müslüman, bu üç halden hali değildir."

to this pious group, Eşrefoğlu Rumi also suggests that there are many people waiting for the night to sin and engage in worldly undertakings following the desires of their *nafs*.<sup>507</sup> After mentioning this second group, Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides several examples in which nightly prayers have been conducted by prophets and Sufi figures to reach a more spiritual connection with the divine.<sup>508</sup>

In order to convey the idea of sleeping less and praise the virtues of sleeping little, Eşrefoğlu Rumi tells the story of Abraham.<sup>509</sup> In the story, one night Abraham cannot help but fall asleep. In his dream, he sees God.<sup>510</sup> God addresses him directly and orders him to slaughter his son. Following this encounter, Abraham suddenly wakes up. He tells his son Ishmael about his dream. They both decide that what God commanded Abraham in his dream is God's will and must be implemented. Ishmael argues that God wishes to punish his father Abraham and therefore he commanded the slaughter of Ishmael. Ishmael further claims that this punishment originates from Abraham's sleep and would not have happened if he had not slept. Thus, the punishment is because Abraham slept and avoided his nightly prayer.<sup>511</sup> Ishmael claims that one who misses his nightly prayer will face a terrible consequence.<sup>512</sup> After

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<sup>507</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 341.

<sup>508</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 344-5.

<sup>509</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 336-7.

<sup>510</sup> In the Islamic tradition, dreams can provide some people with some ideas that are unavailable to them otherwise. Renard, *Friends of God*, 277.

<sup>511</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 337. The ritual mentioned here is *münacat*. It can be translated as prayer or invocation of God.

<sup>512</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 337. “Ya baba, onun içindir ki, yattın bu gece uyudun, dostla münacatı terk eyledin. Uykuya uyup dostla münacatı terk edenin cezası budur ki, başına bunun gibi musibet gele.”

establishing the causality, Ishmael asks his father to clear his sin and slaughter Ishmael for God.<sup>513</sup>

In this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a very common sense logic to connect the concept of sleep and Abraham's story. He uses this famous Biblical/ Quranic story to make his case. This story is familiar to a wider audience, maybe because of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha<sup>514</sup>, in which Muslims remember Abraham's slaughtering of a ram instead of his son. He uses this story to recommend to his audience that pious Muslims should spend part of their nights contemplating and praying to God, rather than sleeping all night. In other words, he positions sleep just like other bodily needs that has to be tamed in order to reach a pious life and being close to God.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi again distinguishes between the high and low levels of piety. He suggests that if one knows the reality of sleep and being awake, even if one sleeps, it does not matter. So, here Eşrefoğlu Rumi clearly does give significance to the context more than the deed itself. It means that if one knows the "truth" about sleep, the fact that he is sleeping (and not engaging in nightly prayer) would not be as bad. He also adds a (spiritual) hierarchical layer into this divergence. He utters the saying that the sleep of the scholar is prayer, the prayer of the ignorant is despicableness.<sup>515</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi adds a very similar Hadith to this saying which

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<sup>513</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 337. "Ya baba, Hakk'ı seven kişiler uyurlar mı? Eğer uyumasan bunun gibi düş görmezdin. Çünkü gördün, emrolundun, kalk imdi emri yerine getir, beni kurban eyle, ta kim ol suçun affola!" dedi."

<sup>514</sup> *Kurban Bayramı* in Turkish, which translates to Feast of Sacrifice.

<sup>515</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 351. "Alimin uykusu ibadettir, cahilin taatı külli zilletir."

claims that the sleep of the scholar is religiously more favorable than the prayer of the ignorant.<sup>516</sup>

## **h. Death**

In a cosmology where the idealized pious lifestyle emphasizes the next world, death emerges as the most important event to capture the imaginations of ordinary believers. Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides an extensive discussion of death in his work.<sup>517</sup> Discussion of death involves descriptions of physical pain originating from the experience of death, which is supported by relevant Hadith and sayings<sup>518</sup> of Caliph Umar.<sup>519</sup> This saying describes for the living what the pain of death could be like.<sup>520</sup> It also describes the emotional pain people feel after death of loved ones.<sup>521</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi's discussion about death does not only provide answers to the curiosity of pious Muslims on an existential aspect of human nature, but also functions as a reminder of limits of human existence in this world. Discussions about death are often intended to discourage ordinary believers from investing themselves in the mundane aspects of the daily life and to reconsider their commitments to a worldly lifestyle. Emphasizing the importance and

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<sup>516</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 351. "Alimin uykusu cahilin ibadetinden hayırlıdır."

<sup>517</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 146-164.

<sup>518</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 146. "'Ölüm dedikleri neye benzer: Mesela bir ağacın dikenleri çok olsa, dahi getirselere bir adamın boğazından içeri soksalar, dahi her dikenini bir damara ulaşırsa, berk tutsa, ondan sonra ol çalıyı bir kuvvetle tutsa çekse, cemi damarlarını hep koparsa, ol kişi nice zahmet çeker; çak şuna benzer can acısı' der"

<sup>519</sup> Ibid. Presumably Caliph Umar I.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

inevitability of death becomes a tool to emphasize the impermanent nature of life. From this perspective, the afterlife becomes the most important part of human existence. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi attempts to orient and prepare his audience towards the afterlife, rather than this life. By doing this, he aims to encourage his audience to embrace a pious and ascetic lifestyle in order to deserve a better afterlife.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi presents death as a huge monster. This monster possesses a myriad of heads, eyes, mouths, ears and wings. In addition, it encompasses the entire world (universe).<sup>522</sup>

*“Oh brother, God created this death very huge. Many people and monsters on Earth; the moon, the sun, and the stars and how many living there are, God gave that many heads to death. And each of those heads has two eyes and each head has a mouth and ears and plenty of hands. Afterwards, the monster has as many heads as all created ones, and wings as much as all things in the universe.”*<sup>523</sup>

Thus, this monstrous creature possesses recognizable anthropomorphic features such as eyes, ears, mouths, and hands. This description serves as a tool for visualization of an abstract concept of death. This visualization could play a significant role in reaching a larger, popular audience because it provides a mechanism to understand or cope with a universal human concern

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<sup>522</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 154.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid. “Ey aziz karındaş, bu ölümü Hak Teala gayet büyük yarattı. Cemi adamlar ve yeryüzünde canavarlar ve ay ve gün ve yıldızlar ve yerde, gökte her ne kadar diri varsa cümlesinin sağışınca Hak Teala ölüme baş verdi. Ve ol başların her birinde cemi yeryüzünde canavarlar sağışınca ikişer gözü var ve her başında ağzı ve kulakları var ve cümle yaratılmış miktarı eli var. Pes canavarın cümle yaratılmış kadar başı ola ve bu mecmu-ı alem adedince kanatları ola.”

like death. In the same section, he discusses the creation of spirits (souls)<sup>524</sup> by God.<sup>525</sup> The monstrous creature of death, which is also created by God, plays a significant role in the supernatural realm by terrifying the creatures of the universe and thus it regulates the affairs of the otherworld.

### **i. Apocalypse and Afterworld**

In the Islamic tradition, the apocalypse is seen as the end of this world and the beginning of the next world.<sup>526</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a description of the apocalypse as well as the afterworld.<sup>527</sup> He discusses concepts such as heaven and hell. In the Islamic tradition the concept of hell is not only connected with the afterlife, but also had connections with this world.<sup>528</sup> Vivid descriptions of the apocalypse, hell, and heaven can function as powerful tools for a pious audience to reflect on existential and metaphysical questions such as death and the meaning of life. Reflecting on such subjects is necessary for human beings to make sense of the world that they are living in. Eşrefoğlu Rumi responds to the inevitable human need to place oneself in the universe and reflect on the meaning of life. One reason for the popularity of works such as this could be because of the response that it gives to the universal human questions about the afterlife.

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<sup>524</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 155. “Öyle olunca, bu ölüm, bu zikrolunan vasfıyla mevsuf ve hem ölmekliğe bais vaz-ı İlahiye ile mevzu bu mana mucibince göze göründükte, elbette onda kişi ölür ve bu ölüm ruhlardan evvel yaratıldı ola.”

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 4.

<sup>527</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 174-183.

<sup>528</sup> Lange, *Paradise and Hell*, 9.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a description of the apocalypse.<sup>529</sup> This description begins with the angel Israfil playing the instrument Sur, which functions as the symbolic event that starts the apocalypse in Islamic tradition. With this event, the dead are resurrected and start to rise from their graves. Narratives of apocalypse function as the revelations which offer a glimpse of the setting of the universe in the afterlife. Just like in the example of death and afterlife, apocalypse also becomes an issue of curiosity for human beings to visualize the universe and the meaning of life.

This element of curiosity is also expressed by Eşrefoğlu Rumi when he cites a Hadith about the apocalypse.<sup>530</sup> In this Hadith, the Prophet responds to the question of a Muslim, Mu'adh Ibn Jabal (Tr. Muaz ibn Cebel), who wonders what happens to people in the day of the apocalypse.<sup>531</sup> Responding to this question, the Prophet describes people gathering in the site of the apocalypse.<sup>532</sup> Some people are covered with *nur*<sup>533</sup>, some people have taken the form of pigs and monkeys.<sup>534</sup> The particular forms in which people exist at the site of the apocalypse represent their eventual fate and status in the afterlife. This narrative plays a role in appealing to the imaginations of Muslims as well as giving them concrete reasons to adopt a pious life and refrain from evil.

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<sup>529</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 177.

<sup>530</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 177-8.

<sup>531</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 177. ““Ya Resulallah, haber ver bana şu günden kim, İsrafil Sur’un vura, bu ölüler kamu sinlerinden çıkalar, acep o hal ol günde ne ola?” dedi”

<sup>532</sup> Ibid. *Mahşer* in the text. “Ol benim ümmetim on bölük ola, her biri bir suretle mahşer yerine geleler.”

<sup>533</sup> Divine light.

<sup>534</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 178. “Kimi bedir olmuş ay gibi yüzü nurlu ola ve kimi maymun gibi ve kimi hınzır suretinde, kimi başları aşağı yüzleri üzerine sürünür gelirler.”

## j. The Owl's Trust

One of the stories Eşrefoğlu Rumi introduces in his work is a story of an owl.<sup>535</sup> In this story, the owl is presented as a pious bird which spends its time with the practice of *zikr*<sup>536</sup>. The owl is presented as an animal which entrusts its livelihood<sup>537</sup> to God.<sup>538</sup> According to the story, the owl's trust means it does not consume everything that is available to it.<sup>539</sup> Of the three birds sent by God to the owl each day, the owl contents itself with eating only one of them.<sup>540</sup> The owl has faith that God will always provide it enough livelihood to survive. For this reason, it contents itself with the limited opportunities in the daily life. Eşrefoğlu Rumi praises this form of trust in God<sup>541</sup> and contentment with little and not over indulging.

According to Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *tevekkül* (putting one's trust in God) is a virtuous and exemplary Sufi characteristic.<sup>542</sup> God is seen as the absolute provider of livelihood for people and other living beings. For this reason, men should trust God and thus God will ensure them enough livelihood to sustain themselves. Entrusting oneself to God means being sure of God's generosity, a key example of Sufi behavior and piety.<sup>543</sup> In this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is also

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<sup>535</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 237.

<sup>536</sup> *Zikr* or *zikir* in Turkish translates to a mystical repetition of God's name.

<sup>537</sup> *Rızık* in Turkish, *rizk* in Arabic.

<sup>538</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 237. "Ve şol baykuş nice bir zayıf kuştur görmez misin? Akşamdan sabaha değin Allah'ı zikreder, sabah olunca varır bir bir halvet köşede Allah'a tevekkül eder, kendi haline meşgul olur, rızık için hiç gam çekmez. Hak Teala ona rızkını durduğu yerde verir."

<sup>539</sup> Ibid. "Ol baykuşcağızı gör kim, ömrünü kanaatle geçirir."

<sup>540</sup> Ibid. "Her günde üç kuş verir, gelir; Hak Teala gönderir. Ol kuşlar ona kendilerini arzedirler, birisini alır, ikisini azat eder; kendi ol baykuşcağızla ertesi akşama değin kanaat eyleyip sabreder. Her gün hali budur, yazda ve kışta."

<sup>541</sup> *Tevekkül* in Turkish, *tawakkul* in Arabic.

<sup>542</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 236.

<sup>543</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 237.



making the case that if a bird can entrust itself to God and achieve this level of piety, there is no reason why humans cannot do the same.

*“Oh poor one, can’t you even be like an animal? You do not have any patience and contentment (with little), right? Don’t you believe in God’s power of being provider of all and don’t you entrust yourself to God?”*<sup>544</sup>

With this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi presents the *tevekkül* of the owl as an example that the common people should emulate. At the same time, he utilizes this story to present the *tevekkül* as a Sufi ideal and the owl as an example that people can easily understand and emulate.

#### **k. The realm of politics**

Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s narratives do not provide meaningful discussions about the subject of politics or the role of political figures within his ideals of piety. A narrative about “the corrupting forces of politics” does not necessarily exist in his work. However, he introduces a story regarding a ruler to make a point about the importance of an ascetic lifestyle.<sup>545</sup> In this story, the ruler confronts an ascetic, influenced by his rhetoric of conducting a spiritual life. The ruler eventually gives up everything, including his position of power to attain an idealized ascetic lifestyle.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 237. “Ey biçare, bir hayvanca yok musun? Ne sabrın var ve ne kanaatın var? Ne Allah’ın rezzaklığına inanırsın ve ne Allah’a tevekkülün var...”

<sup>545</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 159.

<sup>546</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 159.

In this account, political power is presented as just another instance of a profane or worldly lifestyle that is constantly shunned by Eşrefoğlu Rumi's and his Sufi ideals described throughout his work. This point suggests that Eşrefoğlu Rumi does not necessarily engage in a discussion in which the realm of politics is presented as better or worse than the experience of daily life itself. Rather, the political realm becomes just another distraction from living a pious and ascetic life. For this reason, the political realm or rulership is seen as something to be given up in order to lead a pious life.

Another story that touches upon the issue of politics is a story of a king (padişah) who before his death, brings together an audience of his wives, concubines, children, and viziers and asks them to take a lesson from his example. The king, a powerful person, is on his deathbed. This demonstrates that the most powerful person is about to be facing the same fate as any human being which is death.<sup>547</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses this example not only to emphasize the inevitability of death but also to prove that worldly concerns are finite. He explains that worldly concerns such as kingship, statecraft, chivalry, possession of soldiers, realms and treasury are impermanent issues. Thus these issues should not be pursued further and should not be an overriding concern for humans.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi also uses this example to emphasize the notion of regret, especially regret that comes on the deathbed. For this reason, the king suggests to the audience that they should not take him as an example to emulate. In the rest of the story the king expresses his

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<sup>547</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 159.

desire to be put in a coffin without any contact with air, hanging by a chain from the ceiling in his house. This setting is to avoid any creatures to decompose his dead body. Later, the audience finds a black snake in the coffin each time they open it. Later, not being sure about how to treat the dead body of the king they respected, the audience receives advice from the ulema. The ulema recommends a proper Islamic burial, which leads to the proper resting of king's dead body without the harassment of any creatures.<sup>548</sup> The moral of the story is that it is impossible to escape death and what it brings, no matter who you are and whatever power you have. In addition, the story suggests that there is one righteous way out of the troubles of life and death, that is following a pious and Islamic way of life.

### **I. Women in Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Thought**

Eşrefoğlu Rumi mentions women in few instances in his *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*. From these instances, it becomes clear that this work is written from a male perspective. It is hard to know exactly whether the intended audience for this work was exclusively men. Historically, women were more likely to be involved in Sufi practices compared with other aspects of Islamic learning. However, their numbers were still small compared with men.<sup>549</sup> Based on these facts, it is not impossible that women could be present in the intended audience for this work, despite its male perspective.

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<sup>548</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 160-161.

<sup>549</sup> Renard, *Friends of God*, 155.

There are some stories in *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, where women are mentioned in specific ways. One of these instances is a story about the encounter between the devil and God.<sup>550</sup> In this story, the devil is in need of “soldiers” for his evil agenda. In response to this God gives him “the women who are walking in the streets”<sup>551</sup> to be the devils’ soldiers. This claim is definitely a misogynistic one. In addition, in this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi connects the presentation of women and the presentation of the concept of the streets. In the same story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi warns his audience that “people of the streets are people of hell.”<sup>552</sup> Here, one could see an aversion to the urban everyday life that takes place in the streets and the marketplace. Defenders of ascetic ideals like Eşrefoğlu Rumi, have interpreted these places as sinful, and dirty. For this reason, the ascetics are advised to avoid these places.

In one of the stories, Eşrefoğlu Rumi tells his audience that a slave liar told his owner’s wife that his owner wants to marry another wife and the wife believed the liar. At this point, Eşrefoğlu Rumi interrupts the story and tells his audience that women believe in general everything that is told to them regarding this matter. In addition, Eşrefoğlu Rumi goes further and claims that women have less intelligence and have “less religion” and the devil may win more easily their hearts.<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 267-270.

<sup>551</sup> Sokaklarda yürüyen avratlar

<sup>552</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 268.

<sup>553</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 321. “Hemen bunların akli eksiktir, dini eksiktir, şeytan galip olur.”

Despite these claims, Eşrefoğlu Rumi also presents many women as “heroines” in his narratives about piety and exemplary pious behavior. He uses the examples of two women: a pharaoh’s wife and a woman called Maşıta.<sup>554</sup> These two women converted to the religion of Moses and refused to back off from their claims that there is one God and the pharaoh is not a god, even when they were facing death.<sup>555</sup>

### **m. *Zikr***

*Zikr* is the ceremonial repetition of God’s name or names. It is a central Sufi practice, which is representative of the Sufi’s goal of reaching God. By repeating God’s name again and again, the Sufi believes that he or she is approaching the goal of a mystical union with God by going through several spiritual stages.<sup>556</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides examples such as the famous Sufi Mansur al-Hallaj and the famous couple of Islamic literature Layla (Tr. Leyla) and Majnun (Tr. Mecnun), to discuss the connection of *zikr* and divine love. He uses these stories to demonstrate how powerful *zikr* can be when it originates from the Sufi ideal of divine love.<sup>557</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi cites the story of Mansur al-Hallaj within his discussion about *zikr*.<sup>558</sup> Mansur is known to cite the phrase “*ana’l- haqq.*”<sup>559</sup> In this story, they ask Mansur, who is in

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<sup>554</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 260.

<sup>555</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 260-5.

<sup>556</sup> Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 200.

<sup>557</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 390-394.

<sup>558</sup> The story mentioned in this paragraph is from *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*. Eşrefoğlu Rumi mentions Mansur al-Hallaj in his poetry: Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Eşrefoğlu Divanı*, (Istanbul: Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, 1972?), 109.

<sup>559</sup> “I am the Truth (God).”

trance-like state (*esrik*) from the practice of *zikr*. In this condition, Mansur replies that he is God.<sup>560</sup>

After the end of his trance-like state, Mansur claims that he was not aware of the fact that he said that he is God. Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that the Sufi practice of *zikr* can lead the Sufi to such a condition that he will lose his self-awareness, and commit things inconsistent with his true identity.<sup>561</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi defends Mansur by arguing that when one is in a trance, one cannot be judged as the person's real self.<sup>562</sup> In addition, he considers being in a trance a standard practice for significant Sufi figures. For this reason, one should just be accustomed to the type of things that a Sufi in a trance can do and should not judge the Sufi while he or she is in a trance.

*“When Mansur uttered this word, he was in a trance, one cannot treat the word of a person in a trance as valid. Because a few groups are considered incapable of sin, their sins are not valid”*<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> *Ana'l- haqq*

<sup>561</sup> Ernst quotes al-Juzjani's description which describes a similar *fana* (mystical self-annihilation) experience: “*The saint is the one who is annihilated in his state, while God is present in his witnessing of the Real; God takes responsibility for the governing, and the lights of authority come upon him continually. He has no information about himself, nor reliance on any other than God.*” Ernst, *Sufism*, 61.

<sup>562</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 392.

<sup>563</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 392. “Yoksa Mansur bu sözü dediğinde esrik idi, esriğin sözüne hod itibar yoktur. Zira birkaç taifenin günahı yazılmaz, onlar mekrü'l-kalemdir, pes onların küfrüne itibar yoktur.”

With this sentence, Eşrefoğlu Rumi positions Mansur in a category of groups who cannot sin. He argues that Mansur is in a trance, and for this reason the things he said cannot be considered sinful or heretical.<sup>564</sup> One can go even further and argue that it is actually God, and not Mansur who is speaking.<sup>565</sup> It is possible to interpret that Eşrefoğlu Rumi considers the message of Mansur to be heretical. At the same time, he does not accept this particular deed as heretical.

To defend Mansur and his legacy, Eşrefoğlu Rumi argues that if one is involved in (divine) love, one cannot help but constantly utter the name of the beloved. The performance of *zikr* is also seen within this context. Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that the (divine) lover, if he or she is asked anything in a such a condition, will utter nothing but the beloved's name.<sup>566</sup> This is the justification he provides to explain why Mansur claimed that he is "the Truth."<sup>567</sup>

This story is an interesting one because it demonstrates the ways Eşrefoğlu Rumi copes with the legacy of certain Sufi trends and ideas. The legacy of Mansur al-Hallaj became a very powerful Sufi trope, and it is very hard for any major author to ignore it. With this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi does not deny the Sufi image of Mansur. He does not position him in the category of a heretic. At the same, based on the account in *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, Eşrefoğlu Rumi does not approve the message expressed in the form of *ana'l- haqq*. However, we have seen

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<sup>564</sup> Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 150.

<sup>565</sup> Ernst, *Sufism*, 117.

<sup>566</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 393.

<sup>567</sup> Truth (*Hakk*) meaning a name for God.

above that Eşrefoğlu Rumi has written poetry which subscribes to the idea of *ana 'l- haqq*<sup>568</sup>

With this story, he finds a way to acknowledge Mansur without approving the content of Mansur's message and distinguishing himself from Mansur.<sup>569</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses the example of famous lovers of the Islamic literature Layla and Majnun.<sup>570</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi describes Majnun ibn Kays in a similar way to Mansur al-Hallaj. With his strong and passionate love, Majnun does nothing but repeat the name of his lover, Layla.<sup>571</sup> Since he is in a state of trance, just like Mansur, when asked his own name, he is only able to answer "Layla." After a while, his lover Layla hears of Majnun's condition. She decides to find Majnun. When Layla comes in front of Majnun, and makes clear that she is Layla, his lover, Majnun responds that for him, all the universe is full of Layla, just like his heart and he asks her if she is Layla, what is the Layla he feels in his heart?<sup>572</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses this story to make the case for the possibility of losing one's self when being in the realm of love. Eşrefoğlu Rumi is also making the case to normalize this condition at the same time presenting it as a saintly behavior. He presents this behavior as something mysterious, which is hard for common people who are not familiar with the complexities of the Sufi path to understand.<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> Couplets in the beginning of this chapter.

<sup>569</sup> Ernst gives an example in which in a Hallaj, the 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi Jamal al-Din, was accused of heresy by the ulama. However, the leading Sufis argued that it was not permissible to kill anyone overpowered by divine attractions, regardless of what he said. Ernst, *Sufism*, 118.

<sup>570</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 393.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 394.

<sup>573</sup> In Sufism, this will be the divine love.



*“They each have signs (alametler). Afterwards, what is the sign of the fact that repetition (zikir) will reach the soul, love will win the soul, and will erase the human quality, let me tell you, hear me; one should not think each call is a zikir, each fall an erasure, and should not be deceived by each dream. In this path, one sees many dreams; many do not know and live a life of misery.”*<sup>574</sup>

The element of mystery in Sufi narratives plays a significant role in shaping the imaginations of the audience. Eşrefoğlu Rumi keeps this element of mystery in the formation of his narrative. The words such as “*alamet*” play a role in the presentation of this element of mystery. God interferes in affairs regarding Sufism and Sufis, sometimes for mysterious reasons, or reasons that could not necessarily be understood by a lay audience. By establishing connections between the Sufi practices, rituals and deeds, and divine interference, Eşrefoğlu Rumi strengthens his position as a Sufi leader.

In a different example, Eşrefoğlu Rumi argues that Muhammad himself asked Ali ibn Talib to perform the *zikr*.<sup>575</sup> With this suggestion, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is connecting the most important figures in the Islamic tradition with the Sufi practice of *zikr*. In this example, Eşrefoğlu Rumi presents Muhammad as the ultimate shaykh and Ali as the ultimate disciple.

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<sup>574</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 394. “Bunların her birinin alametleri vardır. Pes zikir ruha yetişip, ruha aşk galebe edip talibin sıfat-ı beşeriyasını bir uğurdan fani ettiğinin alameti nedir, onu dahi sana deyivereyim, işit; ta kim her çağırmağı zikir sanmayasın ve her düşüp yatmağı fena sanmayasın ve her hayalata aldanmayasın. Bu yolda hayalat çok görünür, nice bilmezler onun ardınca sürünür, yok yere ömürlerinin çürütürler.”

<sup>575</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 524.

## n. Sama

Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses the Sufi ceremony of *sama*.<sup>576</sup> The practice of *sama* is one of the famous ceremonies that some Sufi orders and figures perform. The Sufi dervishes perform this ritual in order to achieve mystical union with God.<sup>577</sup> In other words, just like in other Sufi ceremonies and deeds, the perceived goal of *sama* is to attain an ecstatic state (*wajd*).<sup>578</sup> This ecstatic stance is performed to lose the notion of the self in order to achieve a closer contact with the divine.<sup>579</sup> This practice's fame spread to many different regions of the Ottoman Empire and was practiced by different Sufi orders.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi argues that some people involved in the practice of *sama* could perform wondrous deeds.<sup>580</sup> He suggests that there are Sufis who, while doing the *sama*, fell into fire and came out without burns, walked on water, and flew like birds.<sup>581</sup> Here, just like in the example of the Sufis in *zikr* performance, the *sama* represents a stage, where the Sufis depart from human nature. He tells the stories of some Sufi figures who have been witnessed flying or being unburnt by fire while doing the *sama*.

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<sup>576</sup> *Sama* dancing dervishes have been described as “the whirling dervishes” by Western travelers visiting the Ottoman Empire. They are famous by this name.

<sup>577</sup> Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 195.

<sup>578</sup> Ernst, *Sufism*, 182-185.

<sup>579</sup> Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 195.

<sup>580</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 398.

<sup>581</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 397.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses whether *sama* is a rightful ceremony that exists in Sufi traditions.<sup>582</sup> He explains that there are three kinds of *sama*. He argues that certain types of *sama* are legitimate Islamic ceremonies. Eşrefoğlu Rumi defends this position by supporting it with a Hadith.<sup>583</sup> According to the Hadith, the prophet says that *sama* is legally approved in Islam, if the Quran is recited during the ceremony.<sup>584</sup> After citing this Hadith, Eşrefoğlu Rumi also supports the legality of *sama* with arguments from a Hadith told by the eponymous founder of Hanbali legal school, Ibn Hanbal.<sup>585</sup>

In the age of Eşrefoğlu Rumi, the ceremony of *sama* had gained a widespread acceptance in the Sufi tradition. For this reason, it was hard to not include a ceremony such as *sama* inside the canon of Sufi practice and rituals. Eşrefoğlu Rumi was probably aware of anti-Sufi views which attempted to present ceremonies like *sama* as innovations that were not traceable to the early days of Islam.<sup>586</sup> For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a defense of ceremonies such as *zikr* and *sama* and criticizes people who claim that they are innovations.<sup>587</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi insists that these ceremonies are not innovations and claims that these critics are greatly mistaken but cannot understand their own mistakes.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 397.

<sup>583</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 400. “Eğer sema içinde Kur'an dahi okurlarsa caizdir.”

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid. “Bu hadis delalet eder kim, kişi, batınına yetiştigi vakit raks ursa caizdir.”

<sup>586</sup> *Bidat* translates to innovation, in this context religious innovations that incorporated into Islam after its emergence. Criticism of *bidat* is abundant in Islamic puritanical movements. Critics of *bidat* claim that religious innovations damage Islam and everything that came after the time of Muhammad should be abandoned to reach religious purity.

<sup>587</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 403.

<sup>588</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 403.

## **o. Patience**

One of the Sufi ideals Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses is the concept of patience.<sup>589</sup> He emphasizes the significance of this concept by quoting sayings, providing explanations, and narrating stories with morals. He quotes the Quran and cites that God is with those who are patient.<sup>590</sup> In addition, he quotes the saying that “patience is the key to happiness.”<sup>591</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses three kinds of patience. The first one is patience for violence and trouble, the second is patience for praying and piety, and the third one is patience for sins, in other words, patience not to sin.<sup>592</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi introduces the story of a woman who is living with an infant.<sup>593</sup> In this story, the woman takes a ritual ablution to pray. Just before her prayer, she turns on the stove to bake bread. As the stove gets hot, she continues to pray. Afterwards, she realizes that the baby had been moving in the direction of the stove while she was praying. When she realizes the danger, she does not move. On the contrary, she is patient and continues to pray. Meanwhile, the baby moves to the stove, and falls into the fire. The woman still does not move and continues until her prayer is finished. After her prayer, she checks out the baby on the stove. Miraculously, the baby is playing inside the fire without any marks of burn. After witnessing this event, she thanks God because he did not let the baby get burned.<sup>594</sup> God kept the baby safe

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<sup>589</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 242.

<sup>590</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 242.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 246.

<sup>594</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 246.

because of the woman's patience. Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses this example to make his case for patience, as a virtue, especially the patience in trusting God and being ready for the troubles that can befall people. He suggests that God would reward those who are patient and entrust themselves to God.

Another story in which Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses the concept of patience is the story of the prophet Job.<sup>595</sup> In this story, the devil asks God to test Job's patience.<sup>596</sup> God agrees to the devil's wish. Afterwards, the devil massacres all the sheep, camels, and cows that Job owns. After witnessing these events, Job keeps his faith intact and continues to pray to God. The devil asks Job why he is still praying to God after God inflicted such troubles upon him. After finishing his prayer, Job responds that he is just a subject of God. As a subject of God, Job argues, he knows his place and does not complain to God. Therefore, Job suggests that everything that he owns belongs to God. For this reason, God has the right to take everything that already belongs to him and his subjects do not have any right to complain about what God decides to do.<sup>597</sup>

The devil decides that Job passed the first test about being patient. Then he decides to target Job's little sons and daughters. When the devil finds Job's sons and daughters in his house, he decides to massacre them. The devil finds him praying and gives him the news that God is angry at him and massacres his daughters. After hearing the news, Job decides that the

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<sup>595</sup> *Ayyub* (ar.), *Eyyub* (tr.) Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 247.

<sup>596</sup> The devil is represented many times as a force who leads the pious men, especially Sufis, to extreme behaviors. Renard, *Friends of God*, 121.

<sup>597</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 248-9.

decision belongs to God and he cannot question God's decision and refuses to disavow God.

With this answer and Job's behavior, the devil has again failed in his mission.<sup>598</sup> When the devil wants to damage Job himself, he finds that Job is protected by an army of angels. Thus he cannot damage Job.<sup>599</sup>

The devil continues his search to test the patience of Job. This time, he provides a group of worms to eat Job's flesh. The worms eat Job's flesh, his health deteriorates, and yet he still lives and he still does not curse God and continues his prayers.<sup>600</sup> When Job realizes worms are eating his flesh, he puts one fallen worm back on his body and realizes that that worm's bite is hurting him and he did not feel any pain from all the worm bites until that point. When he was curious why, God tells him that the worm bites had not caused him pain because God wished so. When, it is Job's decision to put a worm to his body, it hurts because this one is not God's wish.<sup>601</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses the story of Job to provide a discussion on a legendary figure who can serve as an example for Sufi disciples.<sup>602</sup> He attempts to express the idea that one should be able to bear the troubles and difficulties in life despite their level of severity. Eşrefoğlu Rumi communicates the idea that while being patient towards the troubles and pains in life, one should never accuse God nor should one question his motives. Rather, one should endure all kinds of

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<sup>598</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 249.

<sup>599</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 250.

<sup>600</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 250-1.

<sup>601</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 252.

<sup>602</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 247-54.

troubles that one can face without complaining about them. This kind of rhetoric can be especially powerful considering that many people face troubles and misery in life, and could lead them to turn away from a pious life rather than turning their strong feelings towards the realm of religion.<sup>603</sup>

The story depicts an image of an omnipotent God. This omnipotent God can create trouble for his subjects while at the same time he can protect them from trouble. This idea of an omnipotent God is also a central part of Sufi Islam, just as it is in the other Abrahamic religions. In addition, the story in which Job loses everything and endures excruciating pain gives him a status similar to an ascetic. It is at that point that God protects him and Job gains divine favor.<sup>604</sup> Thus, the story also emphasizes the ascetic ideal of Sufism.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses patience mostly within the framework of patience towards a trouble that God has bestowed upon humans.<sup>605</sup> One of these troubles that humans have always faced is disease. He praises people who endure pain and disease without complaining about their conditions. He claims that God will send these people to heaven.<sup>606</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi also claims that those who visit the sick are to be rewarded. He refers to a Hadith according to which God will bestow seven hundred days of good deeds upon a person who visits a patient.<sup>607</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi argues that enduring the diseases is in itself a form of prayer.<sup>608</sup> He claims that those who

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<sup>603</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 243.

<sup>604</sup> Renard, *Friends of God*, 55.

<sup>605</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 242-3.

<sup>606</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 254.

<sup>607</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki 'n-Nüfus*, 255.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

endure diseases are religiously doing good deeds. By enduring disease they are absolving themselves of sin. Eşrefoğlu Rumi even cites a Hadith claiming that being subject to pain from one thorn absolves one of a sin.<sup>609</sup> He even claims that diseases can be welcome because they will provide an opportunity to decrease one's sins.<sup>610</sup>

Another way in which patience is understood as a virtue is within the framework of being patient against the urge for revenge and punishment when one has the power and means to do it. In these circumstances, patience is also seen as a power to resist against feelings of revenge and violence. Eşrefoğlu Rumi quotes the Quran and a Hadith<sup>611</sup> to make the case for this idea and recommends that people resist the temptation to seek revenge and forgive others even when they are guilty.<sup>612</sup>

## **p. Wonders**

Eşrefoğlu Rumi makes the case that God is the only source of wonders and miracles.<sup>613</sup> In addition, he suggests that God has the power to give some of his wonder power to certain special individuals that he favors.<sup>614</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that important saints such as Abd

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<sup>609</sup> “Bir diken batmak zahmetiyle bir mü'mine, Hak Teala onun bir günahını gidermeğe sebep olur. Yani ol mü'minin bir günahı gider.”

<sup>610</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 254-6.

<sup>611</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 266. “Her kim kakımağın yutsa, gücü yeterken kakıdığı kişiden intikamın almağa, nefsinin şad etmeğe sabretse, Hak Teala onun gönlünü imanla doldura.”

<sup>612</sup> Ibid.

<sup>613</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 420. Wonders (*mujizat*) and miracles (*karamat*) have been established as separate but similar phenomena in the Islamic tradition. In the Hanafi school *mujizat* is associated with prophets and *karamat* is associated with saints. Ernst, *Sufism*, 61.

<sup>614</sup> “Allahu Teala'nın tasarruf verilmiş kulları vardır kim, her nice dilerse ederler, hiç nesne bunlara mani olmaz.”



al-Qadir Gilani<sup>615</sup> had known how to perform such wonders. Abd al-Qadir Gilani is also the founder of the Qadiri order that Eşrefoğlu Rumi had joined after which he was trained in a Qadiri convent in Syria. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is invested in presenting Gilani as a special saint.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi presents a story in which a scholar who is one of the “people of scholarship”<sup>616</sup> denies the sainthood of Gilani.<sup>617</sup> In the story, this scholar disputes that saints can perform miracles and denies that they can subject time to their will. This segment serves as a reminder to the rest of the population that there will be people who will question the saints’ power to work wonders. Eşrefoğlu Rumi uses this story to argue that the people who deny the saints’ power will ultimately believe in them when they witness these wonders first hand. In addition, he uses this story to legitimize the sainthood of Gilani, the founder of the Qadiri order, which Eşrefoğlu Rumi joined and to whose dissemination in the Ottoman Empire he contributed.

#### **q. Submission**

The concept of submission is a very central idea in the Islamic tradition. The word “Islam” itself means submission (to God).<sup>618</sup> Here, Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses the concept of

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<sup>615</sup> Abd al-Qadir Gilani (d.1166) is known to be the eponymous founder of the Qadiri Sufi order. He was born in the Gilan region of Iran. He is known to be a follower of Hanbali madhhab. Süleyman Uludağ, “Abdülkâdir-i Geylânî,” *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/abdulkadir-i-geylani>.

<sup>616</sup> *Ehl-i ilm*. *Ilm* can be used for natural as well Islamic sciences. It is most probably the case that this person is a scholar of Islamic sciences.

<sup>617</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki’n-Nüfus*, 419.

<sup>618</sup> The word Islam ( اسلام ) comes from the Arabic root s-l-m س ل م which means “to submit” among other meanings.

submission (*teslim*) in the context of the submission of the disciple to the shaykh.<sup>619</sup> He mentions submission of the disciple to the shaykh<sup>620</sup> among the five conditions of being a disciple.<sup>621</sup> He compares the situation of the disciple in this relationship to slavery.<sup>622</sup> Elsewhere, he goes even further and uses the analogy of the corpse cleaner to explain the submission of the disciple.<sup>623</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that the disciple's relationship with the shaykh should be like the corpse cleaner and the corpse. Just like the corpse raises no objection to the corpse cleaner, the disciple should not raise any objection or complaint towards the shaykh.<sup>624</sup>

In a different instance he uses the story of Abraham and his son Ishmael to discuss the importance of submission.<sup>625</sup> In this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi praises Ishmael for letting his father, Abraham, slaughter him. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi argues that Ishmael submitted himself completely to God's will and therefore let himself be slaughtered by his father. As a reward, God decides that Ishmael should live. Therefore, God does not let Ishmael die and presents a ram instead.<sup>626</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that just like Ishmael, the complete submission of the disciple will eventually lead to a reward.

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<sup>619</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 463.

<sup>620</sup> *Mürşid* in the text.

<sup>621</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 427.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid. "...şöyle abd-i memluk gibi."

<sup>623</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 463-4.

<sup>624</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 463.

<sup>625</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 466.

<sup>626</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 466.

In a different example, Eşrefoğlu Rumi provides a relationship of a shaykh and a dervish.<sup>627</sup> Şeyh Süleyman-ı Darani one day commands his dervish (and disciple) to enter an oven. The dervish enters and while inside the oven he performs the *zikr*. Afterwards, Şeyh Süleyman-ı Darani commands him to get out. Once the dervish exits the oven, one can see that he is not burned and has not suffered in any other way. Şeyh Süleyman-ı Darani suggests that for the dervish, the fire will be like a rose garden.<sup>628</sup>

In light of these examples, the ideal disciple would be someone who is completely obedient to the shaykh, will do whatever the shaykh asks and will not question the shaykh.<sup>629</sup> In other words, the ideal disciple is the person who submits himself/herself to the shaykh. Eşrefoğlu Rumi is using the idea of submission to God and incorporating it into a Sufi submission that is between the shaykh and the disciple. Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that the shaykhs possess many tricks.<sup>630</sup> The actions of the shaykhs can appear as troubles or as pleasures to many. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that the shaykhs possess *hikmet* (wisdom) and the best thing to do is to be patient with the shaykhs.<sup>631</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi argues that having a family would hinder the disciple in his Sufi path.<sup>632</sup> He cites the Quran stating that “property and children are nothing but a disturbance.”<sup>633</sup> Şeyh

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<sup>627</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 467.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 464.

<sup>630</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 499.

<sup>631</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 499.

<sup>632</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 474. Many Sufis saw having children or a family as worldly attachments that might hinder successful advancement on the Sufi path. Renard, *Friends of God*, 126.

<sup>633</sup> “Mallarınız ve çocuklarınız bir fitneden başka bir şey değildir. (Enfal, 28) ”

Süleyman-ı Darani states that the disciples who get married, who demand salaries, and who wrote Hadith are engaging with the material world.<sup>634</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests that one should give away property before joining a shaykh.<sup>635</sup>

#### **r. Honesty**

Eşrefoğlu Rumi emphasizes the significance of honesty as a Sufi and Islamic virtue. He incorporates the story of Abd al-Qadir Gilani into the text.<sup>636</sup> In this story, Gilani begins his journey to Baghdad. Before he leaves, his mother advises him to be righteous in every circumstance. When he joins the path of God, Gilani embraces the principle of righteousness. He joins a caravan leaving for the city of Baghdad. On his way, the caravan encounters a group of bandits. In this encounter, the whole caravan is robbed. However, when the bandits question Gilani about what he possesses, Gilani honestly tells them the truth that he has forty *filoris*.<sup>637</sup> The bandits do not believe him and mock him.

The head of the bandits inquires about the situation and asks his men to bring Gilani to him. When the bandit chief asks Gilani about the forty *filoris*, Gilani tells him the truth again and gives the money to the bandit chief. After witnessing Gilani's behavior, the bandit chief asks Gilani why he did not hide his money and gave it to him when it was asked. Gilani replies by referring to his mother's advice to him to be truthful and to God's affection for truthful people

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<sup>634</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 474.

<sup>635</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 476.

<sup>636</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 431-3.

<sup>637</sup> A currency.

and his (God's) aversion to liars. After hearing Gilani, all the forty bandits proclaim that they are repenting and will not commit banditry anymore and ask Gilani to be their leader. After their encounter with Gilani, they give him back his money and perform good deeds.<sup>638</sup>

### 3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the making of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's piety. I have elaborated on the relationship and differences between "popular" and "high" aspects of Sufi piety. This chapter studies essential concepts that Eşrefoğlu Rumi discussed in his work *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*. These concepts play a seminal role in the making of his Sufi piety. Particularly important is the seminal position of the concept of *nafs* that Eşrefoğlu Rumi discusses in his work *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*. He connects most of the other concepts to the concept of *nafs*. He suggests that taming the *nafs* would lead the person to control one's mind and body which would lead the person to achieve a more spiritual and pious life. All of which will lead him to the Sufi quest of mystical union with God.

I have elaborated on Eşrefoğlu Rumi's strategies that he has employed to make *Müzekki'n-Nüfus* reach a more popular audience. These strategies include informative sections about the basics of Sufi and Islamic traditions, elements including wonder and miracles to speak to the curiosities of his audience, and stories that include morals that the audience can associate themselves with on a more personal level. Popularizing a piety which distinguishes between the

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<sup>638</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi, *Müzekki'n-Nüfus*, 433.

people and the spiritual elite seems like an oxymoron. However, Eşrefoğlu Rumi succeeds in this quest.

## Chapter 4: The Legacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi

*İlm-i zahire taleb iden bize gelsün, ilm-i batın taleb iden Eşrefzade<sup>639</sup> 'ye varsun!<sup>640</sup>*

Those who seek exoteric knowledge should come to us, those who seek esoteric knowledge should reach Eşrefzade.

### 4.1. The Making of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Legacy

Eşrefoğlu Rumi has had a long lasting and influential legacy from the 15<sup>th</sup> century up to today. His ideas and books have contributed to the understanding of Islam and Sufism among the Ottoman Turkish-speaking population. His books are still being read in Turkey by Turkish-speaking Muslims to understand and make sense of their faith.<sup>641</sup> In addition, his name entered into the canon of Anatolian and Turkish Sufism and saintly figures. For this reason, he can be seen as one of the makers of Anatolian, Ottoman, as well as Turkish-speaking Islam.

One reason why Eşrefoğlu Rumi was so influential is because he was responding to a demand that existed then and continued to exist in the subsequent centuries. The need of Turkish-speaking Muslims to address curiosity and to interpret their faith in their native language led to this demand. By responding to this demand, Eşrefoğlu Rumi was able to provide ideas, stories, explanations, and narratives. By authoring works that explained sophisticated concepts,

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<sup>639</sup> Eşrefzade is Eşrefoğlu Rumi. Instead of the *-oğlu* suffix (the son of) in Turkish, its Persian version (*-zade*) is used.

<sup>640</sup> Abdullah Veliyyuddin Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2009), 16.

<sup>641</sup> Kara, "Eşrefiyye," in *TDVİA*.

provided morals, and responded to the curiosity of this audience, he was able to build a legacy for himself in the literature of Ottoman and Turkish-speaking Islam and Sufism.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is most famous for his career and legacy in Sufism. He is famous for being a Sufi shaykh, having a Sufi order named after him, and a Sufi convent he established in his hometown of İznik.<sup>642</sup> This order is the Eşrefi branch of the Qadiri order. Eşrefoğlu Rumi is also popular as the author of the book *Müzekki ün-Nüfus*. This work became one of the most influential books about religion in Anatolia. Mustafa Kara suggests that *Müzekki ün-Nüfus* can be considered part of the list of important religious reference books for Ottoman society that affected the religiosity of the society.<sup>643</sup> Kara and several other authors consider Eşrefoğlu Rumi a founder of the Eşrefi Sufi order, a branch of the Qadiri order.<sup>644</sup> For example, Resul Ay describes Eşrefoğlu Rumi as a Sufi who, after being trained in the Qadiri tariqa in Syria, settled in İznik, Anatolia. According to Ay, Eşrefoğlu Rumi embraced a mission to spread the Sufi ideas of the Qadiri tariqa in Anatolia.<sup>645</sup>

In this chapter, I will discuss in more detail the legacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. This legacy has been understood differently by different groups in different times. Apart from his works, Eşrefoğlu Rumi's legacy consists of the Eşrefi Sufi order that has been established in his name. I will discuss how different groups — be they religious like the Bektashis, or occupational, like the ceramic manufacturers in İznik — have accepted him into their own cultural and spiritual

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<sup>642</sup> Nicaea.

<sup>643</sup> Mustafa Kara, *Bursa'da Tarikatler ve Tekkeler* (Bursa: Bursa Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2012), 192.

<sup>644</sup> Kara, *Dervişin Hayatı*, 142.

<sup>645</sup> Ay, *Anadolu'da Derviş ve Toplum*, 23.



framework. I will use the *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, a hagiographical source to analyze how the Eşrefi tradition has presented Eşrefoğlu Rumi.

#### 4.2. The Making of the Eşrefiyye

The Sufi order that developed after the figure of Eşrefoğlu Rumi was the Eşrefiyye. Eşrefiyye can be seen as a separate Sufi order or a continuation of the Qadiri order in Anatolia, i.e. the Anatolian branch of Qadiri Sufi order. The Qadiri Sufi order was established after the legacy of famous Sufi Abd al-Qadir Gilani (d.1166). The spiritual legacy and lineage of Gilani continued after his death within the Qadiri Sufi tradition. During the lifetime of Eşrefoğlu Rumi, the Qadiri Sufi lineage had passed to Hussain al-Hamawi. It is in the town of Hama (in Syria) that Eşrefoğlu Rumi received his Sufi training from Hussain al-Hamawi. For this reason, by the time of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's return to Anatolia, the Qadiri Sufi order had spread to Anatolia.<sup>646</sup>

The Eşrefiyye order became influential around İznik after Eşrefoğlu Rumi founded a dervish lodge there. It has been suggested that after İznik, an Eşrefi Sufi lodge was established at Bursa.<sup>647</sup> Only after three centuries was an Eşrefi Sufi lodge (Abdal Yakub Tekkesi) established in Istanbul.<sup>648</sup> After the death of Eşrefoğlu Rumi, his son-in-law Abdürrahim Tirsi (d.1520) became the leader (*postnişin*) of the Eşrefi Sufi order. The *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade* can be

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<sup>646</sup> There might be other Qadiri dissemination into Anatolia before Eşrefoğlu Rumi and by different channels. Mustafa Kara, "Bağdat'tan Bursa'ya Bir Yol: Eşrefiyye," in *Journal of the History of Sufism*, ed. Thierry Zarcone, Ekrem Işın and Arthur Buehler, (Istanbul: Simurg, 2000), 399.

<sup>647</sup> Kara, "Eşrefiyye," in *TDVİA*.

<sup>648</sup> Adalet Çakır, "Kadiriyye," in *Türkiye'de Tarikatlar: Tarih ve Kültür*, ed. Semih Ceyhan (Istanbul: İsam Yayınları, 2011), 174.

seen as the hagiographical source that communicated the Eşrefi Sufi ideas among the Ottoman Sufi audiences. One of the most significant legacies of Eşrefoğlu Rumi is the Eşrefiyye order that survived from his time all the way to the modern times.

#### 4.3. Diversity of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Legacy

Some authors have attempted to connect Eşrefoğlu Rumi with the Bektashi tradition. This connection might originate from Taşköprülüzade's account<sup>649</sup> of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. Taşköprülüzade suggests that Eşrefoğlu Rumi was abducted by Kalenderi dervishes and had to travel with them until the end of his life.<sup>650</sup> In his study on the Bektashi tradition, John Kingsley Birge claims that, although Eşrefoğlu Rumi was not a Bektashi himself, he was one of the most popular poets among the Bektashis.<sup>651</sup> Why would a self-described Sunni Sufi be embraced by non-Sunni groups as their own? Is this proof of what Terzioğlu calls a rapprochement between Sunnism and Sufism?<sup>652</sup>

Bedri Noyan Dedebaba claims that Muhyiddin Abdal was a prominent Bektashi and Eşrefoğlu Rumi's son.<sup>653</sup> In addition, Dedebaba argues that Eşrefoğlu Rumi's poetry has been sung in the Bektashi convents.<sup>654</sup> These examples suggest how complicated the legacy of a

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<sup>649</sup> Taşköprülüzade was the author of a very important 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman biographical dictionary.

<sup>650</sup> Taşköprülüzade, *Osmanlı Bilginleri* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2007), 185.

<sup>651</sup> John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Luzac Oriental, 1994), 80.

<sup>652</sup> Terzioğlu, "Sufis in the Age of State-Building and Confessionalization," 91.

<sup>653</sup> Bedri Noyan Dedebaba, *Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşilik ve Alevilik*, vol. 4 (Ankara: Ardıç Yayınları, 2001), 275.

<sup>654</sup> Dedebaba, *Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşilik ve Alevilik* vol. 4, 679.

historical Sufi figure can become generations after their death. It demonstrates how their legacy could mean different things to different groups of people.

The debate about Eşrefoğlu Rumi among different groups could be best captured in the words of the editor of *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*.<sup>655</sup> Abdullah Uçman suggests that Bektāşis attempted to show Eşrefoğlu Rumi as their own.<sup>656</sup> In addition, he claims that except from a couple of poems<sup>657</sup> written within the framework of *wahdat al-wujud*<sup>658</sup>, he did not write anything that could be considered against sharia.<sup>659</sup>

#### 4.4. Eşrefoğlu Rumi's Legacy as Patron Saint

Another reason for Eşrefoğlu Rumi's success originates from the fact that he and/or his followers were able to establish a legacy for him that is based in a locality— his birthplace and hometown of İznik. The fact that he became the patron saint of the local ceramic manufacturers provides an example of the effect of his legacy on his hometown. This probably made Eşrefoğlu Rumi a significant Sufi figure that local people could embrace and take pride in.

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<sup>655</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, XIX-XX.

<sup>656</sup> It has been suggested that the Bektāşis incorporated many (sometimes including those considered “heterodox” saints, such as Kalenderis) as their own. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Kalenderiler*, 210-215.

<sup>657</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, XIX. Uçman gives this couplet as an example: *Tecelli şevk-i didarın bei mest eydedi hayran, / Ene'l-hak sırrını canım anınçün kılmadım pinhan*.

<sup>658</sup> Unity of Being.

<sup>659</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, XX.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi's legacy in the town of İznik led different groups to embrace his legacy in different ways. One source of İznik's fame came from the development of a local ceramic manufacturing tradition. Ceramic manufacturers, over the centuries were able to transform İznik into a major center for the Ottoman ceramic manufacturing industry. İznik produced artistic ceramic products, including tiles for many famous Ottoman buildings.<sup>660</sup>

The ceramic manufacturers of İznik adopted Eşrefoğlu Rumi as their patron saint.<sup>661</sup> The specific reasons for his acceptance by the ceramic manufacturers is not known. However, one can speculate that his status as their patron saint was probably because of the fact that his convent was established in the area in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and his followers have continued to reside and be active in İznik since then.<sup>662</sup>

The adoption of Eşrefoğlu Rumi as the patron saint of ceramic manufacturers can be seen in the work of a local ceramic manufacturer known by the nickname of Musli. Musli cites Eşrefoğlu Rumi's name as the *pir* of their local ceramic manufacturers guild in a short poem dedicated to the manufacturing of a ceramic products.<sup>663</sup> This dedication demonstrates that the local population embraces the legacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi as an important local saint. One could argue that Eşrefoğlu Rumi's legacy had an impact on Ottoman craftsmen and thus in Ottoman art history.

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<sup>660</sup> Ara Altun and Belgin Demirsar Arlı, "İznik Tiles," in *İznik Throughout History*, ed. Işıl Akbaygil, Halil İmacık and Oktay Aslanapa (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2003), 237- 243.

<sup>661</sup> Walter B. Denny, *Iznik: The Artistry of Ottoman Ceramics* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 147.

<sup>662</sup> Kara, "Eşrefiyye," in *TDVİA*.

<sup>663</sup> Denny, *Iznik*, 147.

#### 4.5. Making of the Legacy: *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*

Eşrefoğlu Rumi's works have obviously been seminal in the making of his legacy. In addition, sources written about him in the later centuries have played a role in the formation of his legacy. One of the most prominent sources that shaped the legacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi is *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*.<sup>664</sup> This is a hagiographical account of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life. It was written by one of his disciples of the Eşrefî order called Abdullah Veliyuddin Bursevi in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The account is called *menakıb*, after its literary genre. A *menakıb* is a compilation of miracles and marvelous deeds of influential saintly and Sufi figures.<sup>665</sup> This account includes deeds and miracles believed to have been performed by Eşrefoğlu Rumi. In this account, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is presented as a Sufi shaykh and saint. At the same time, Bursevi provides accounts of the miracles or marvelous deeds which prove his sainthood (*wilaya*) in the eyes of the pious Muslims who are following him.<sup>666</sup>

What was the intended audience for *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*? To begin with, one may point to the followers of the Eşrefî order, people who were already part of this order and needed a narrative of the life of their eponymous founder to make sense of their group identity. Another possible audience can be people who are inclined to be interested in Sufism and wished to learn more about prominent Sufi figures.

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<sup>664</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*.

<sup>665</sup> Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*, 27-30.

<sup>666</sup> Renard, *Friends of God*, 8, 270; Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*, 3, 28-29.; Ernst, *Sufism*, 69.

What was the purpose of *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*'s authorship? Scholars have suggested that *menakıbnames* were accounts which provide a propaganda for their Sufi orders.<sup>667</sup> For this reason, it is possible for one to evaluate Abdullah Veliyuddin Bursevi's account as a document intended to provide a particular message about Eşrefoğlu Rumi and the Eşrefi order.

In the *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, the author, Abdullah Veliyyuddin Bursevi, mentions an encounter between the famous *alim* of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Kutbu'd-din İzniki,<sup>668</sup> and Eşrefoğlu Rumi.<sup>669</sup> In this encounter, Eşrefoğlu Rumi comes to the mosque of Kutbu'd-din İzniki.<sup>670</sup> He asks the muezzin to begin the morning prayer. Following this, Kutbu'd-din İzniki engages in an argument with Eşrefoğlu Rumi.<sup>671</sup>

Eşrefoğlu Rumi has been praying in semi-darkness for the daily dawn prayer. Following this, the two argue over the time of dawn prayer. Eşrefoğlu Rumi tells İzniki that it is time for the dawn prayer. İzniki disagrees and argues that it is not yet the time for the dawn prayer.<sup>672</sup> After Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that it is the time for the dawn prayer for a second time, İzniki disagrees with him for a second time. As a response, Eşrefoğlu Rumi points to the east. İzniki looks east and observes that the sun has already risen and thus Eşrefoğlu Rumi was right the first time.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>667</sup> Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*, 36.

<sup>668</sup> Kutbu'd-din İzniki was an Ottoman scholar who lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>669</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 16.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid. "Meger ol zamanda fazıl-ı Rum Kutbu'd-din İzniki Hazretleri hayatda imiş. Eşrefzade Hazretleri'ne vakt-i müstehabbı ta'lim itmek niyyetine mescidlerine gelür."

<sup>671</sup> Ibid.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid. "*Molla Kutbu'd-din dahı: "Vakt olmadı!" diye müezzini men'ider."*

<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

Kutbu'd-din İzniki asks God for forgiveness because of his arrogance towards Eşrefoğlu Rumi.<sup>674</sup> Afterwards he utters the sentence: “Those who seek the exoteric knowledge should come to us, those who seek the esoteric knowledge should reach Eşrefzade.”<sup>675</sup> With this sentence, İzniki accepts the authority of Eşrefoğlu Rumi in spiritual matters. Eşrefoğlu Rumi affirms the position of Sufis (and thus himself) with his response and contrasts it with the madrasa style Islam that İzniki represents: “Molla Kutbu'd-din, you engage in the Islamic science of analogical reasoning, but the dervishes engage in divine contemplation!”<sup>676</sup>

This story symbolically provides a discussion of the relationship between the Sufi and scholarly traditions from the Sufi perspective. This story also demonstrates that the coexistence of Sufi and scholarly traditions were not devoid of tensions.<sup>677</sup> It is clear that works like *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade* represent the point of view of a Sufi order and attempt to communicate the values and ideas of these Sufi orders to the Ottoman public.<sup>678</sup>

This story from the *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade* cements the image of Eşrefoğlu Rumi as a major and influential Sufi figure. The author puts the Sufi legacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi in a higher position than Kutbu'd-din İzniki. It gives a sense of pride to his Sufi followers. This perspective

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<sup>674</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 16. “Mevlana Bursevi, Kutbu'd-din dahı şark tarafına bakar görür ki, hurşid-i alem-tab Kuh-ı Kaf kulesinden iki adem kaddi mikdarı mürtefi' olmuş, heman ol sa'at Hayy! diyüp bir na'ra-i saht urup Sultan Eşrefzade'ün damanına yüzler sürüp küstahlugından istigfar ider.”

<sup>675</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 17. *İlm-i zahire taleb iden bize gelsün, ilm-i batın taleb iden Eşrefzade'ye varsun!*

<sup>676</sup> Ibid. “Molla Kutbu'd-din, sen kıyas-ı zann [ile] amilsin, amma dervişan mu'ayene ve müşahede ile amillerdür!”

<sup>677</sup> There is long tradition of scorning the mystical path by madrasa scholars. Renard, *Friends of God*, 167.

<sup>678</sup> Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*, 36.

is apparent in the section when Kutbu'd-din İzniki recognizes his mistake and arrogance towards Eşrefoğlu Rumi.

By making Kutbu'd-din İzniki accept his mistake and arrogance, the author positions Eşrefoğlu Rumi as the spiritual figure who possesses a more sophisticated and deeper understanding of the Islamic faith than Kutbu'd-din İzniki. In the story, the Sufi figure Eşrefoğlu Rumi is able to calculate the prayer time more accurately than a madrasa scholar, Kutbu'd-din İzniki. Eşrefoğlu Rumi is presented as more capable than a madrasa scholar like Kutbu'd-din İzniki.

With stories like this, the Sufis were able to built an identity for themselves by separating themselves from madrasa style Islam. Such stories also emphasize a dichotomization of madrasa vs. Sufi varieties of Islam (or *zahir*, exoteric vs. *batın*, esoteric). This example is fascinating because it demonstrates that tensions between juristic and mystical aspects of Islam continued to exist.<sup>679</sup> However, there were many examples of productive coexistence as well.<sup>680</sup>

By elevating Eşrefoğlu Rumi to a higher position than Kutbu'd-din İzniki, the author also elevates his Sufi piety to a higher level than the scholarly (madrasa) style Islam that Kutbu'd-din İzniki represents.<sup>681</sup> In the story, the last sentence provides a clue into the differences between scholarly and Sufi Islam. By contrasting the exoteric and the esoteric, the author gives validity

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<sup>679</sup> Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 231-232.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid.

<sup>681</sup> It has been suggested that saints have to build their Sufi spiritual knowledge (*marifa*) upon learning from the traditional religious sciences (*'ilm*). Renard, *Friends of God*, 167.



to both of the traditions. He gives this validity from the point of view of a scholar. By making Kutbu'd-din İzniki acknowledge the legitimacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi, it indicates that the madrasa Islam is recognizing the validity and legitimacy of Sufism and Sufi piety.

#### 4.6. The Image of a 15<sup>th</sup> century Saint according to *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*

In modern works, Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life story follows a similar path. Modern authors tell of him following the Sufi path, reaching Hacı Bayram and going to Hama, and returning to Iznik to found his own *tekke* (dervish lodge).<sup>682</sup> These stories are based on Eşrefoğlu Rumi's life story in *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*.<sup>683</sup>

One of the *menkıbes*<sup>684</sup> in this source deals with the question of how the fame of the Sufi figures can coexist with their Sufi principles. In Sufism, one of the most pressing concerns is the question of how one can tame his or her own self (*nafs*). This requires getting into a mental stage in which one disassociates from worldly attachments and connections. For this reason, one has to disentangle oneself from any notion of fame. On the other hands, influential Sufi figures became the subject of increasing interest from the people, especially when different Sufisms became mainstream forms of Islamic piety. Obviously, this appears to be a paradoxical situation.

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<sup>682</sup> Mustafa Kara, "Eşrefiyye," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, accessed July 19, 2020 <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/esrefiyye>.; Kara, *Eşrefoğlu Rumi*, 34-41.; Fahir İz, "Eshrefoghlu 'Abd Allah," *EI2*, 282-283.

<sup>683</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*.

<sup>684</sup> Parts (chapters) of hagiographies in which wonders or inspirational stories about their lives are recorded.

In this *menkıbe*, a person who is familiar with Eşrefoğlu Rumi from Hama, Syria comes near İznik.<sup>685</sup> This person disseminates stories of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's wonders to the people around İznik.<sup>686</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi becomes concerned about the praise that he will get from the local people after they hear the stories told by the traveler from Syria. For this reason, he decides to leave town.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi goes for a walk in the mountains. During his walk, he encounters a person who asks for his identity. Eşrefoğlu Rumi responds that he is a fugitive.<sup>687</sup> Following this, the person decides that he should be turning Eşrefoğlu Rumi in to law enforcement. The person brings Eşrefoğlu Rumi to a village called Tirse and imprisons him in a house there. Afterwards, this person tells his mother about the situation and leaves the house.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi asks his captor's mother for some water for ablution . The mother starts to suspect that this person (Eşrefoğlu Rumi) can be the the dervish from İznik. When asked by the mother, Eşrefoğlu Rumi confirms that he is the dervish from İznik that people are talking about. Here, even though Eşrefoğlu Rumi wanted to conceal his identity, he reveals it himself. The account explains this situation by stating that it is because a saint cannot lie.<sup>688</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 14 .

<sup>686</sup> Ibid. "Siz bu 'azizün keyfiyyet ve halini bilmezsiniz, böyle istihkar idersünüz. Bu azizün şehir-i Hama'da nice kerametlerü zuhur eyledi!"

<sup>687</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 14 . "Bir kaçgın kulum!"

<sup>688</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 15. "Çünkü veliden kizb vaki olmaz."

After the revelation of Eşrefoğlu Rumi's identity, first the mother and then the captor both ask for forgiveness from Eşrefoğlu Rumi.<sup>689</sup> After this they build a lodge at the nearby creek, Pınarbaşı. In this lodge Eşrefoğlu Rumi continued to pray.

The story communicates several significant points about Eşrefoğlu Rumi. First, it suggests that being proud of oneself and enjoying fame are feelings that can be dangerous for Sufis. Since the Sufi path puts a very strong emphasis on "taming one's self," fame and pride become obstacles to reaching this aim. For this reason, Eşrefoğlu Rumi begins his walk in the mountains, away from the town of İznik. There, he is away from people's praising chatter about him that is spreading.

Once Eşrefoğlu Rumi is away from people, he encounters another person. Eşrefoğlu Rumi's claim to be a fugitive is an attempt to conceal his identity. However, since later, the author argues that the saints do not lie, his claim of being a fugitive may be interpreted metaphorically. The Sufi ideals that he propagates includes principles of asceticism and embracing an ascetic lifestyle. For this reason, his wandering in the mountains away from society fits into this ascetic framework.<sup>690</sup>

This encounter leads to some trouble for Eşrefoğlu Rumi as he is imprisoned in a house. This imprisonment can also be seen metaphorically, as many Sufis engage in ritual isolation

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<sup>689</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 15. "... ol dayı istigfar idüp biat eylemişdür."

<sup>690</sup> In many hagiographies, ascetic Sufis wander in nature or travel. During their travels they face different obstacles that constitute a part of their spiritual experience. Renard, *Friends of God*, 60-62.

(*khalwa*) to get closer to God.<sup>691</sup> However, this imprisonment does not last long. The mother of the captor starts doubting the narrative about the identity of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. Following this Eşrefoğlu Rumi has to admit his true identity as the mother asks him directly if he is that saint from İznik that people are talking about. The way this event unfolded suggests the limits of concealing one's identity. Concealing one's identity is a practice that some Sufis did for different reasons. I have demonstrated in an earlier chapter instances in which Eşrefoğlu Rumi argued for the concealment of a Sufi's identity.<sup>692</sup> However, this account limits the concealment of one's identity with the idea that the saints cannot commit the sin of lying.

In the end, the construction of the dervish lodge for Eşrefoğlu Rumi suggests some kind of connection between him and the town of Tirse, where these last events took place. The source, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, also contains *menkıbes* about Abdürrahim Tirsi,<sup>693</sup> the second *pir* of the Eşrefiyye Sufi order, who was from this village. The construction of a lodge and an association with the town Tirse also connect Eşrefoğlu Rumi with Abdürrahim Tirsi. This association is meaningful as it draws a line of continuity between Eşrefoğlu Rumi himself and his successor. In addition, the story connects the narrative to several Sufi ideals, as Eşrefoğlu Rumi conceals his identity, fights with his *nafs*, goes through seclusion, and finally gives himself to a peaceful meditative life.

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<sup>691</sup> According to Ibn Arabi, imprisonment can be compared with the pious experience of being trapped in this world. Renard, *Friends of God*, 150.

<sup>692</sup> See pages 128-129 of this dissertation.

<sup>693</sup> Abdürrahim Tirsi (d.1520) was born in the village of Tirse near İznik. Tirsi is known to be the second *pir* of the Eşrefiyye Sufi order and the successor of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. He married Eşrefoğlu Rumi's daughter. Tirsi wrote Sufi poems similar to the style of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. Nuri Özcan, "Abdürrahim Tirsî," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/abdurrahim-tirsi>.

Pir Hamid Efendi tells an interesting story in a different *menkıbe* in *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*.<sup>694</sup> In this story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi practices meditative seclusion (*halvet*) while he observes an interesting event. The sky opens into two pieces and a light (*nur*) emerges from the opening. Suddenly, he hears a voice coming from this opening. This voice says the following: “Oh my subject, wish from me whatever you want, I made all things forbidden permissible for you.”<sup>695</sup> Following this, Eşrefoğlu Rumi tells God that he holds the cursed devil by his hand and holds it firmly.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi hears a voice from his hand which says “Oh shaykh, God gave me life until the day of apocalypse. I would not die, do you want to kill me?”<sup>696</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi makes the devil to promise not to interfere with his disciples and loved ones’ beliefs, in exchange for freedom.<sup>697</sup> After the devil promises Eşrefoğlu Rumi that he will not interfere with their beliefs, Eşrefoğlu Rumi lets the devil go without being persuaded by him: “The cursed one, you have not been honest with your promise to God, how would you be honest with your promise to me?”<sup>698</sup>

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<sup>694</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 18-19.

<sup>695</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 18.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid. “*Ya şeyh n’eylersin? Hak Teala bana kıyamete dek meal virmişdür. Ölmezem, sen beni öldürmek istersün!*”

<sup>697</sup> Ibid. “*Mel’un, benüm müridlerimün ve ahibbalarımın imanlarına kasa eylememeye ahd eyle, seni salıvireyüm!*”

<sup>698</sup> Ibid. “*Mel’un Hak Teala ile ahdine vefa itmedün, benimle olan ahdüne mi vefa ideceksin!*”

Following this, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is asked how he you knew that it was the devil. He responds that he understood that was the devil when he heard the voice saying “I made all things forbidden permissible for you.”<sup>699</sup>

This story presents an image of Eşrefoğlu Rumi as a saint who performs miracles and wonders, which fits into the genre of hagiographies (*menakıbnames*). The author praises Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s skill at distinguishing between what is evil and what is divine. Even though the symbol of God (*nur*: divine light) appears from the sky, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is still able to recognize the evil that has taken the shape of the divine. The story conveys the message that the evil might disguise itself as the good or godly in life. Only saints or wise people like Eşrefoğlu Rumi can fully distinguish the evil from the good.

The way in which this distinction is made by Eşrefoğlu Rumi is also very significant. Eşrefoğlu Rumi realizes that the light from the sky is actually satanic rather than divine only when he hears the phrase “I made all things forbidden permissible for you!”<sup>700</sup> With this remark the author expresses Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s (or the Eşrefi order’s) emphasis on preserving the distinction between the *halal* (permissible) and the *haram* (forbidden). This approach demonstrates Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s (or the Eşrefi order’s) commitment to the sharia (and normative Islam). This way, Eşrefoğlu Rumi’s image (or the Eşrefi order’s) is separated from the antinomian Sufi orders that were also popular in early Ottoman history.

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<sup>699</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 19.

<sup>700</sup> The devil who attempts to trick the Sufis by abolishing what is considered lawful by society has been used in the hagiographical narratives. Renard, *Friends of God*, 121.

In another *menkıbe*, a group of people put a madrasa student into chains in the Germiyan province and began to travel to bring him to Istanbul.<sup>701</sup> On their way to Istanbul, this group stops by İznik and stays there for two nights. Afterwards, they continue on their journey to Istanbul and arrive at a town called Hersek. At night, the chained madrasa student encounters in a dream a man who claims that soon he will save him. The madrasa student is surprised and asks the man of his identity. The man responds that he is Eşrefzade, he is in İznik, and tries to comfort the student by asserting that he will be free soon.

Afterwards, the group takes the student to Istanbul.<sup>702</sup> There, they lock him in an official's house to bring him to the pasha (a high-ranking Ottoman official) in the morning. At night, the student hears again a voice in his dream saying that now it is the time and wants him to leave the house now. Following this, the student wakes up and is able to leave the house without anyone noticing, even though his hands are not free. He goes to a locksmith shop and asks the shopkeeper to free up his hands. The shopkeeper agrees and he becomes finally free. Following this, he thanks and prays for Eşrefoğlu Rumi for helping him.<sup>703</sup>

This story communicates a powerful message about the wonder-making power of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. He is presented as a saint who is able to communicate with humans in their sleep. In addition, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is portrayed as a saint who is able to find and help an oppressed person.<sup>704</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi is able to guide and save him from potential troubles that

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<sup>701</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 33.

<sup>702</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 33.

<sup>703</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 34.

<sup>704</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 33. “çünkü sen mazlumen bizim yanımıza gelesin”

this person faces in his life. In the story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi not only communicates with the madrasa student, but also guides him in every step of his journey to freedom without obstacles. The story suggests that the people who are able to come near the lodge of Eşrefoğlu Rumi will receive his blessing and spiritual help in this world and in the afterlife.<sup>705</sup> In the end, the person is freed after an imprisonment. Imprisonment has been compared with the ritual isolation (*khalwa*) of the Sufi.<sup>706</sup> Thus, the freedom that comes after the imprisonment can be interpreted as the spiritual regeneration of the Sufi that follows the ritual isolation.

#### 4.7. Eşrefoğlu Rumi and Ottoman Political Life

In the *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, Bursevi suggests some connection between Eşrefoğlu Rumi and Mehmed II.<sup>707</sup> In this hagiographical account, Mehmed II wants to remedy a medical issue with his mother's tongue. However, none of the physicians and medicines available to them are able to heal this problem. After a while, Mehmed II hears about a shaykh in İznik who has an impressive blessing power and ability to heal.<sup>708</sup> Mehmed II commands his men to summon this shaykh who is called Sultan<sup>709</sup> Eşrefzade.<sup>710</sup> When Eşrefoğlu Rumi hears the news of the sultan

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<sup>705</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 34. “Bu kıssadan bize hasıl oldu ki, asitane-i aliyyelerine ru-mal iden kimesne dünyevi belasından reha-yab olunca ziyaretlerine vurup hidmet-i aliyyelerinde bulunan muhibb-i sadıklar dünya gamından ve ahiret azabından halas olmak bi't-tarıkı'l-evladur.”

<sup>706</sup> Renard, *Friends of God*, 150.

<sup>707</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 22-6.

<sup>708</sup> “...mübarek nefesleri berekatı-y-ıla şifa-yab ola!” In many hagiographies saints were depicted with healing capabilities. Renard, *Friends of God*, 103-104; Antov, *The Ottoman Wild West*, 212.

<sup>709</sup> The name “sultan” has usually been used for those who hold political authority. However, in certain cases, the term is also used for Sufi saints who possessed spiritual authority. This usage may be interpreted as the spiritual authority holding a value comparable to political authority. Or by using the the same title for spiritual and political leadership, the author could attempt blur the lines between these forms of authority. Antov, *The Ottoman Wild West*, 66-67.

<sup>710</sup> The name used in the hagiographical account for Eşrefoğlu Rumi.



summoning him to court, he refuses to come and replies that there is no divine command.<sup>711</sup>

When he hears Eşrefoğlu Rumi's response, Mehmed II again commands that Eşrefoğlu Rumi should come to his court. Eşrefoğlu Rumi gives the same response.

The second time Mehmed II receives the same response, he gets angry and commands that Eşrefoğlu Rumi should be executed.<sup>712</sup> The sultan's men plan to drown Eşrefoğlu Rumi in a container of wine.<sup>713</sup> Eşrefoğlu Rumi finds this group and commands the dervishes to bring him the container. When the dervishes open the container, they realize that it is full of honey. Eşrefoğlu Rumi has transformed wine into honey with his mystical power. Following this event, Eşrefoğlu Rumi claims that now divine will has manifested itself and commands that Mehmed II be informed. Despite opposition from his ulema, Mehmed II decides to go to Eşrefoğlu Rumi and takes a galley to reach the town of Karamürsel.<sup>714</sup> When Mehmed II arrives and finds Eşrefoğlu Rumi, he kisses the saint's hand.<sup>715</sup> Mehmed II recounts his mother's condition.

In the story, Eşrefoğlu Rumi agrees to meet with the sultan when there is a divine command. This fact suggests that there is some power superior to that of the sultan who represents political power. So, in the interaction of political authority represented by Mehmed II

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<sup>711</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 23. "Emr-i İlahi yokdur, gidemezem!"

<sup>712</sup> Facing problems with the authorities is a common trope in many hagiographies. Renard, *Friends of God*, 150-152.

<sup>713</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 23. "Bir yük hamr"

<sup>714</sup> The town of Karamürsel or Praenetos in Greek, located on the southeastern coast of Marmara sea north of İznik, is where Eşrefoğlu Rumi lived.

<sup>715</sup> The sultan's visitation of a saint in the countryside can also be found in many hagiographical sources. Renard, *Friends of God*, 151- 152.

and spiritual authority represented by Eşrefoğlu Rumi, spiritual authority supersedes political authority.<sup>716</sup>

The transformation of wine into honey suggests the wonder making capabilities of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. Wine, which is not permitted in the Islamic law is being transformed to honey which is seen as a permitted substance. So, it symbolizes the transformation of “bad” into “good” because with the same transformation the sultans’s men became unable to drown him.

Eşrefoğlu Rumi became an influential Sufi figure in his lifetime. It has been suggested that during the time of Mehmed II, the Ottoman vezir Mahmud Pasha<sup>717</sup> became a disciple of Eşrefoğlu Rumi.<sup>718</sup> Did Mahmud Pasha really become a disciple of Eşrefoğlu Rumi? Or is the author is attempting to connect Eşrefoğlu Rumi to the Ottoman state (represented by Mehmed II) by establishing a connection between him and Mahmud Pasha?<sup>719</sup>

In a different *menkıbe*, Mahmud Pasha is imprisoned by Sultan Mehmed II in the Yedikule Fortress.<sup>720</sup> The account does not specify the reason for this imprisonment other than stating that it is for a small crime.<sup>721</sup> The *menkıbe* connects Mahmud Pasha to Eşrefoğlu

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<sup>716</sup> In many hagiographies, saints and their power were acknowledged by the sultans. Renard, *Friends of God*, 151; Halil İnalcık, “Dervish and Sultan: An Analysis of Otman Baba Vilayetnamesi,” in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays in Economy and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1993), 29.

<sup>717</sup> Mahmud Pasha (d.1474) was an Ottoman statesman of Serbian and Byzantine origin who served as grand vizier, 1456-1468 and 1472-1474.

<sup>718</sup> Fahir İz, “Eshrefoghlu ‘Abd Allah,” *Eİ2*, 282-283.

<sup>719</sup> Both Eşrefoğlu Rumi and Mahmud Paşa are known for their anti-Hurufi views.

<sup>720</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 36. Yedikule Fortress is located by the city walls of Istanbul and was used for imprisoning convicts during the Ottoman period.

<sup>721</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 36. “... bir cüz’i cürm-ile...”

Rumi.<sup>722</sup> In this story, Mahmud Pasha sends a messenger to Eşrefoğlu Rumi to ask him for help with a matter concerning his aunt.

In response, Eşrefoğlu Rumi sends some people to find Mahmud Pasha's aunt. When they find the aunt and explain the situation to her she thanks God by stating that now her prayers are answered. When Eşrefoğlu Rumi's men inquire about the reason why she is exclaiming this, she responds by saying that while Mahmud Pasha was a navy captain, he executed her innocent son. As a reaction to this execution, she put a curse on Mahmud Pasha.<sup>723</sup>

When Mahmud Pasha's men hear this story, they become hopeless and return to Istanbul. After they report everything to Mahmud Pasha, he loses hope of living. At midnight, the sultan's men come and execute Mahmud Pasha. The account ends the story by stating that later Mehmed II regrets this execution.<sup>724</sup>

The story provides an explanation for the execution of Mahmud Pasha. It is interesting that the account claims that Mahmud Pasha has been imprisoned because of a small crime without specifying what it is. At the same time, the *menkıbe* argues that Mehmed II later regretted the decision to execute Mahmud Pasha. So, the figure of Mahmud Pasha is presented as someone who committed a sin by executing a young boy and suffered later because of this crime. However, despite this sin of his, Mahmud Pasha is not presented as a cruel statesman. He

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<sup>722</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 36. “Meger merhum Mahmud Paşa, Eşref-zade Sultan Hazretleri’nden Münib imiş.”

<sup>723</sup> Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, 37. “...hararetle ol zaman beddua itmiş idüm”

<sup>724</sup> Ibid.

is presented as a person who committed a sin and who could not escape from his fate that is connected with this sin.

Meanwhile, Eşrefoğlu Rumi is seen as a significant figure whom Mahmud Pasha turns to for help in his difficult time. However, in this account, Mahmud Pasha's sin and the strength of the woman's curse (*beddua*) overcome the wonder-making power of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. In the Islamic tradition the curse (*beddua*) is only carried with God's will. For this reason, the only thing a cursed person can do is accept divine intent, and thus their fate. This is the reason why Mahmud Pasha accepts his faith and loses his hope for life. Thus, the story emphasizes the significance of fate, curses which are only carried with divine will. In addition, the story positions Eşrefoğlu Rumi as a trusted holy figure whom an Ottoman statesman turns to in a time of need.

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

Eşrefoğlu Rumi is among the major influential 15<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Sufi figures. His legacy is mostly visible in the dervish lodge and the Eşrefî order named after him. Abdullah Veliyuddin Bursevi, a member of the Eşrefî order, presented Eşrefoğlu Rumi as a wonder making saint and connected him to the Ottoman state. Bursevi, in the *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade*, presented Eşrefoğlu Rumi as a saint who assisted Mehmed II and was respected by him. His Eşrefî order and legacy is especially strong around İznik, where he lived. His patron saint status among the ceramic manufacturers in İznik can be seen as a result of his regional influence.

Nevertheless, Eşrefoğlu Rumi's legacy was also seminal in the development on Ottoman Islam, especially in Anatolia and the Balkans. This was extremely significant because Eşrefoğlu Rumi authored works in which he promoted his version of Sufi piety. Throughout the centuries, his Sufi and Islamic ideals reached a significant segment of Ottoman population. In addition, this Sufi piety became a central piece of Ottoman religious landscape. It is this influence that might make some Bektashis claim him as of their own.

## Conclusion

This dissertation attempts to demonstrate that the 15<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the rise of a distinct Ottoman Sufi tradition, which entailed an increasing demand for scholarly and religious works catering more specifically to the needs of Ottoman audiences. This demand originated from the trend of Islamization in Anatolia and the Balkans. This trend led to the dissemination of Islamic high culture as well as Sufism in Anatolia and the Balkans. In this context, scholars and Sufis such as Eşrefoğlu Rumi contributed to the formation of this Ottoman Sufi culture. This formative era was a significant period that shaped the journey of the Ottoman Sufi culture.

By discussing Eşrefoğlu Rumi's conceptualization of his Sufi ideas, I have attempted to question the dichotomization of orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Within this framework, "orthodoxy" can be a subject of analysis without the scholar taking a side on issues regarding what constitutes "the right Islam." I suggested an understanding of orthodoxy that can be conceptualized in relation to one's articulation of a particular expression of religious ideas. In this framework, scholars and Sufis, such as Eşrefoğlu Rumi, can be seen as influential figures who have constructed their own "orthodoxies."

I have attempted to elaborate that Eşrefoğlu Rumi popularized several Sufi ideals including reaching God for God's sake and a shaykh-centered piety which provides a vision to find the right shaykh for Sufi disciples. In addition, he emphasizes Sufi ideals of possessing the right intention, ritual remembrance of God, and asceticism. His understanding of asceticism

includes taming of one's *nafs* (soul, ego), seclusion, being patient, trusting and submitting oneself to God.

I attempted to discuss Eşrefoğlu Rumi as a Sufi figure who popularized several Islamic and Sufi ideas. While doing it, he maintained an elitist framework, dividing society according to a Sufi spiritual hierarchy. In this hierarchy some people possessed higher spiritual virtues than others. Despite this framework, he was able to vernacularize Islamic and Sufi ideals for the Ottoman populace. I elaborated that this role of his (a “popularizing elitist”) is far from self-contradictory (as it may look on the surface).

Finally, I have elaborated on the legacy of Eşrefoğlu Rumi. I have demonstrated that Eşrefoğlu Rumi's legacy was especially strong in the region around İznik. In this region, the Eşrefi branch of the Qadiri Sufi order was established and the later tradition of the Eşrefi Sufi order has seen him as their founding figure. Eşrefoğlu Rumi reached a status of “a local saint” and became part of local identity. Somewhat surprisingly, the Bektashi tradition, which is theologically different from the Eşrefi Sufi tradition, also perceived Eşrefoğlu Rumi as one of their own and embraced him.

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